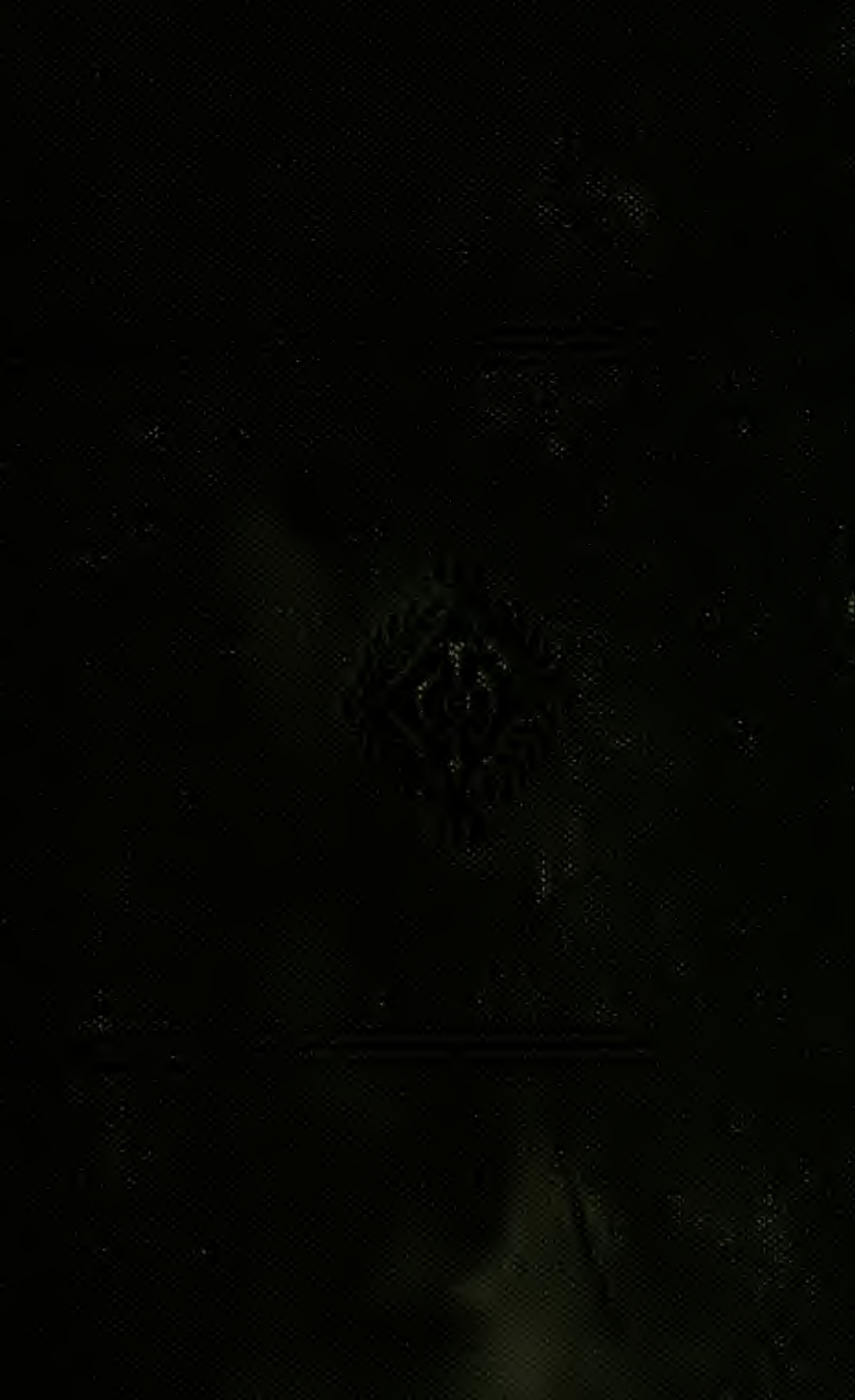

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CHRIST

AND MODERN UNBELIEF

BY

RANDOLPH HARRISON McKIM

Rector of the Church of the Epiphany
Washington, D.C.

"Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth? . . . Come and see."

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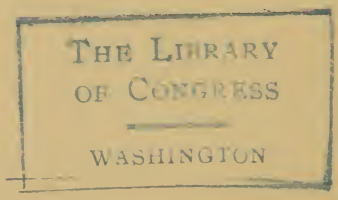

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To

THE ST. ANDREW'S BROTHERHOOD

WHOSE CHOSEN AIM

IS TO BRING YOUNG MEN TO JESUS

I DEDICATE THIS VOLUME

IN THE HOPE THAT IN THEIR HANDS

IT MAY HELP SOME TO RECOGNIZE

IN THE MAN OF NAZARETH

THE MESSIAS—THE CHRIST OF GOD

"Christus, si non Deus, non bonus."

PREFACE.

I YIELD to the request of some who heard these lectures and give them to the press because I want to bear my small part in the work of helping honest doubters to solve the doubts suggested by modern unbelief as to the true nature of Jesus Christ; and also because I would help, if I may, those who would equip themselves as defenders of the faith to appreciate the specific nature of the assaults made by the unbelief of to-day, and to place their defense upon impregnable ground.

Especially would I endeavor, on behalf of both these classes of readers, to disentangle apologetics from the irrelevant issues in which it is too often lost, and to emphasize the supreme importance of concentrating our defense upon the citadel of the faith—the person of Christ. It is hardly necessary to add that this little book makes no pretense to present a complete view of the evidences of Christianity, or to be a defense of the whole circle of its fundamental truths, but only to give in small compass and in popular language sufficient reasons to any candid inquirer for accepting Jesus of Nazareth

as the Son of God and the Saviour of the world. Equally unnecessary is it to disclaim originality for arguments familiar to students of the best modern writers on apologetics. If I have succeeded in stating those arguments tersely and clearly, and so given a burning-glass to focalize the rays of truth upon the great problem of the personality of Christ, my aim has been reached.

May He who fed a great multitude from the scanty store of one little lad accept at my hands this lowly offering and use it for the good of some of my fellowmen.

R. H. McK.

WASHINGTON,
Septuagesima Sunday, 1893.

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I.

THE CITADEL AND ITS DEFENSE.

"It is very important . . . to notice how thoroughly the method of attack is changed from that of the *deistic* controversy of the last century. Then it was the glorification of Nature, in order to depreciate the arguments for the need of a Revelation, with which Christianity was assailed. Now we find ourselves depreciating Nature, and finding in her alleged imperfections and apparent cruelties an argument against the benevolence or against the omnipotence of God."—Rev. Henry Footman, M.A.

"Nous pouvons négliger pour le moment cette contrariété d'opinions, pour nous en tenir au point de vue essentiel d'où elle procède. Il y a une question capitale quidomine ces débats. Jesus-Christ, est-il le Fils de Dieu, coéternel avec le Père? l'Evangile, est-il une révélation miraculeuse? le christianisme, vient-il de Dieu on des hommes? . . . En considérant le christianisme comme un fait historique, l'on doit se demander s' il diffère dans son essence des autres religions, si sa doctrine, si son établissement, si son extension ne peuvent s'expliquer que par une intervention miraculeuse de la divinité. La question est capitale."—F. Laurent, *Études sur l'histoire de l'humanité.*

I.

THE CITADEL AND ITS DEFENSE.

"Can ye not discern the signs of the times?"—MATT. xvi. 3.

IN approaching the consideration of the evidences of Christianity, it is important to recognize the fact that our study must be conducted in the light of the conditions of the times in which we live. Our Lord rebuked the Pharisees because they did not "*discern the signs of the times.*" We, as defenders of the faith, or even as ourselves inquirers concerning the faith, will commit a capital error if we fail to adopt in the one case our defense, in the other case our investigation, to the peculiar conditions of thought and belief which characterize our age. We too must seek to "discern the signs of the times." We must know our own age before we can commend to its intelligence the faith once delivered to the saints. Our arguments must be addressed to the thought of the nineteenth century, not to that of the eighteenth or of the sixteenth.

In other words, the science of apologetics must adapt itself to the changes which occur in the attitude of men's minds towards the great questions that un-

derlie the Christian position. Arguments and courses of reasoning which are valid and sufficient in one age or in one generation are not necessarily so in another. The postulates which the Christian apologist may assume, and upon which he may build his argument, in the one case, may no longer be recognized in the other, and so his whole edifice of reasoning may rest on a doubtful foundation. Unless your premises are admitted by those to whom you address yourself, you will argue in vain.

Moreover, if the assailants of the Christian position change their line of attack, as they have done, a different line of defense is thereby rendered necessary.

1. Let me illustrate my meaning by a concrete example.

In the eighteenth century the deists led the attack upon the Christian position. They were met by Bishop Butler and Archdeacon Paley, whose immortal works, "The Analogy" and "The Evidences," constituted a complete defense. Under these leaders the champions of the faith met the deists on their own ground and with their own weapons, and the issue was a complete rout for the assailants of Christianity.

Butler dealt with the philosophical questions involved. The deist acknowledged the existence of God and that he was the Author of the system of

Nature. Taking advantage of this admission, the author of "The Analogy" argued that the same objections which the deist raised against the system of Christianity held with equal force against the system of Nature. But since it was conceded that in the latter case they did not overthrow belief in the divine origin of the world, it could not be pretended that they were valid objections against revelation. He proceeded to show an analogy between the chief doctrines of the Christian revelation and the order of Nature, and argued hence the probability of the two systems having proceeded from the same author. Paley, setting out with the same assumption of the being of God, and his goodness, presented the positive proof of the Christian religion, undertaking to establish by historical evidence that the chief miracles alleged in the Gospels actually occurred. The argument from miracles is his *chief* argument. All others, including the character of Christ and the moral power of Christianity through the ages, he classes as only "auxiliary evidences." (A glance at his table of contents is sufficient to show this.)

Now as to the force and the effect of the blows delivered by these two protagonists of the Christian host in the last century, I entirely concur in the judgment recently pronounced by an able writer: "Here is a definite system of evidence, admirably adapted for its purpose. There can be no question

that it was successful. The deistical assaults upon revealed religion were driven back by the deists' own methods. Reason was met by reason. The fight was upon ground of the unbeliever's own choice, and his defeat was utter. All was done with consummate skill. The candid seeker after truth clearly perceives the balance turning to the Christian side. The world has never seen finer reasoning of its kind, more convincing, better sustained, characterized by more of the clearness and simplicity of superior truth than that of Butler and Paley." *

Nevertheless the arguments of these great reasoners are not adequate to make good the Christian position to-day. Why? For the simple reason that the whole situation is changed. The enemies of Christianity are ranged under a different banner. The attack is from a different quarter. The weapons used are different.

Deism, after flourishing during the first half of the eighteenth century, rapidly declined in influence, and by the beginning of the nineteenth was in its dotage. It was succeeded by pantheism in its several phases—a most dangerous and subtle adversary of the faith, because it pays an outward deference to the religion of Jesus, doing obeisance to it as the crown and consummation of religious development.

* L. F. Stearns, "The Evidence of Christian Experience," p. 8, Ely Lectures for 1890.

Then came the scientific assault culminating in the doctrine of evolution in its nontheistic form. Close upon the heels of the scientific movement came the agnostic philosophy of which Herbert Spencer is the most distinguished representative.

You see, then, how completely the situation is changed since the days of Butler and Paley. They were confronted by deism, which confessed that God was the Author and Ruler of the universe. We face pantheism and agnosticism, which deny a personal God, or declare that he is unknowable. They were able to assume as the basis of their argument the being, the power, the wisdom, the goodness of God. We, on the contrary, are obliged to make good those great truths of theism.

Paley was able to hang the weight of the Christian argument upon the miracles, and these again upon the authenticity of the books of the New Testament. We, on the contrary, can use the miracles only as a subsidiary evidence. While he proved the divine mission of Christ by the miracles, we reverse the process of argument and prove the miracles by his divine character. He was able to assert that the Christian religion was the *only* religion which any intelligent person would attach any value to. We, on the contrary, find some of the ethnic religions occupying a place of great consideration among large numbers of intelligent and educated persons.

Plainly, then, the arguments which were valid and sufficient to establish the Christian position in the last century are not adequate to the exigencies of the case in this the last decade of the nineteenth century. And if we, as the appointed teachers and defenders of the faith, go forth to meet its assailants armed only with the arguments of the great apologists just alluded to, we shall be guilty of a logical anachronism. As well arm our soldiers to-day in the armor worn in the time of the Crusades! As well seek to protect the cities of our seacoast against the terrific force of modern artillery by the stone walls which easily resisted the cannon of a hundred years ago!

What then? Must we no longer study Paley and Leslie and Watson? Must we lay aside the immortal "Analogy"? On the contrary, that greatest work of the greatest Bishop of Durham is, I believe, indeed immortal, and will continue to exert a quickening power upon the thought of the world for generations to come. Read it, mark it, learn it, and inwardly digest it. Go back to it, and re-read it as often as you can. But do not suppose that it meets all the issues of to-day, for that it certainly does not, and in the nature of the case could not do. Paley also and his coadjutors should not be neglected. No, my counsel rather is that you read the work of some representative deist like Tindal, or Bolingbroke, or Shaftesbury, or, in default of this, the Rev. John

Hunt's review of the deistic literature in the eleventh chapter of his work on religious thought in England; and then read Paley or Leland or Leslie in reply. Having done this, you will then be prepared to study the antichristian and antitheistic literature of our own day. Do this, if possible, at first hand. Read Renan and Strauss and Huxley and Herbert Spencer and Cotter Morrison and other representative thinkers of the camp of unbelief; and so seek as your first aim to understand the character of the assault directed by these able men against the faith. This done, you will be prepared to appreciate the defense of the faith which is successfully made by such writers as Bushnell, Row, Maccoll, McCosh, Godet, Pressensé, Christlieb, Uhlhorn, and others.

2. But I pass to another point, also of great importance to the successful study of the evidences of Christianity. If the logician must ask himself distinctly, What is it I propose to prove? if the architect must clearly see what is the character of the building he undertakes to erect; if the military engineer must decide what place or region of country he will fortify against the invading army—equally necessary is it for the Christian apologist to place distinctly before his mind what it is he proposes to defend, and for the student of the evidences to have a definite conception of the thing whose evidence he is seeking to master.

What is it, then, whose evidence we propose to investigate? Christianity. Not a system of theology, observe, but Christianity. The difference is fundamental and vital. Christianity, if true, is a divine revelation. Theology is a human system deduced by men from the divine revelation. Theology is a science, and, like all other sciences, is progressive. Christianity is a definite deposit of revealed facts and truths once for all delivered, and it is the same to-day that it was nineteen centuries ago.

Our inquiry pertains to the evidence of that revelation, not of the doctrinal systems deduced from it by ecclesiastical councils or individual doctors. We want to convince others, or we want to assure ourselves, as the case may be, that Jesus Christ did indeed come in the flesh, that he did indeed reveal God's will, that he was indeed the Saviour of the world.

Further, there are two significations of the term Christianity: the more complex and the more simple. In the former it is a complete series of facts and a complete system of divine truth—like some vast cathedral, complex in plan, harmonious in details, magnificent in proportions. In the latter sense Christianity consists of those essential facts and those fundamental truths which are necessary to a Christian faith and a Christian life. If these be so few and so simple that they do but conduct us to

the porch of the great cathedral, still they are sufficient for the great practical ends in view.

Now, I take it, it is Christianity in this simpler, more elementary form whose evidences we are seeking to grasp. We want to make Christians our fellow-men, not theologians. We want to bring them to the great conviction uttered by the eunuch of Ethiopia. You remember the story: He and Philip sat together in the chariot; they came to a certain water; the eunuch said, "See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?" Philip answered, "If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest." The eunuch answered, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God." If we can so marshal the evidences of Christianity as to bring men to that great confession of the central truth and the central revelation of the gospel, we will have accomplished the chief aim of our endeavors. For what is our first duty? What is our supreme mission as the ministers and stewards of the mysteries of God? Is it not to fulfill the commission given on Olivet? "Go ye therefore, make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." And for discipleship in the Church of Christ, be it remembered, it is enough that a man believe the elements of the Christian religion, the articles of the Apostles' Creed.

Now, taking a broad view of the contents and

significance of this apostolic faith, we may say that it is summed up in two propositions: (1) Christianity is a redemptive revelation. (2) It is also a living power in the world to-day. This, then, is the aim of our apologetics, to convince men that "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself," and that his gospel is to-day the living power of God unto salvation. That is to say, we wish to establish the truth of Christianity considered both as a record of revealed facts and as a present power of moral and spiritual salvation to men.

3. If the position now taken is correct, then it follows that there is a multitude of questions pertaining to the Christian religion which, though interesting and important, do not concern the Christian apologist, because they are not vital to the Christian position.

Take, for instance, the great question of the inspiration of the Bible. Of course we cannot *assume* it in our argument for Christianity. To prove Christianity by the inspiration or authority of the Bible would be to beg the question at issue. This is obvious, though it is not always observed.

But now I desire to point out that the truth of Christianity is independent of the inspiration of the Bible. Even though the Bible were not inspired, Christianity might yet be true. Even if we could not recognize in the writings of the New Testament

the result of the influence of the Holy Ghost upon the men who wrote it, it might still be possible to accept Jesus Christ as the Son of God and the Saviour of the world. It is therefore no essential part of the duty of the Christian apologist to establish the inspiration of the Bible, or any part of it. Do not misunderstand me. I believe the Bible is inspired, and I believe its inspiration can be established to the complete satisfaction of the Christian mind—though some of the commonly accepted theories of inspiration cannot be established. But we can prove the divine origin of Christianity, the divine mission of Christ, and his claim to be the Lord and Saviour, without ever raising the question of inspiration. It is possible, therefore, to believe in Christ and to be a sincere Christian without believing in the inspiration of the Scriptures. I do not say it is *reasonable;* I only say it is *possible.* This was recognized two hundred and fifty years ago (1615–1691) by that devout and able nonconformist Richard Baxter, who has not without reason been called "the father of English apologetics." He wrote as follows: "We doubt not but to prove that Scripture is God's full and infallible law; yet if it were so that this could not be proved, this would not overthrow the Christian religion. If the Scriptures were but the writings of honest men, that were subject to mistakes and contradictions in the manner and circumstances,

yet they might afford us a full certainty of the substance of Christianity. . . . Tacitus, Suetonius, Livy, etc., were all heathens, and very fallible; and yet their history affords us a certainty of the great substantial passages of the Roman affairs which they treat of. . . . Now if Scripture were but such common writings as these, especially joined with the uncontrolled tradition that hath since conveyed it to us, may it not yet give us a full certainty that Christ was in the flesh, and that he preached this doctrine for the substance, and wrought these miracles to confirm it, and enabled his followers to work the like, which will afford us an invincible argument for our Christianity?" *

Let me give an illustration of this position. It is now almost universally admitted by scholars, however unfriendly to Christianity, and may consequently be considered an established and settled fact in the domain of criticism, that the first four Epistles of St. Paul—Romans, First and Second Corinthians, and Galatians—are genuine writings of Saul of Tarsus, and were written within, say, twenty-five years of the date of the death of Christ.

Now if we had no other line or word of the New Testament but only these four letters, we would have a foundation broad enough and deep enough to support our faith in the superhuman character and mis-

* See "Homiletic Cyclopedia," p. 88.

sion of Jesus Christ. Every fundamental fact and truth of Christianity is found here, and the admitted honesty and capacity of the writer make him a witness whose testimony is of the very highest value. It is not too much to say, then, that we have in these four undisputed Pauline letters a sufficient historical basis for our faith, without the aid of the rest of the Bible, New or Old Testament, and without claiming inspiration for Paul or for his writings.

The recognition of the fact that the truth of the Christian religion is *not* bound up with belief in the infallibility or even the inspiration of the Bible is of the utmost importance. It clears the ground of discussion of many irrelevant issues. It is then seen that however the questions between the Bible and science are determined, they do not necessarily involve the integrity of the Christian religion. Suppose you make out to your entire satisfaction that Genesis and geology are irreconcilably opposed (which I, for one, do not believe), this conclusion does not shake the evidence by which we are convinced that Jesus of Nazareth was a superhuman person, and that his mission was divine. Equally clear is it that most of the questions debated so earnestly in our day on the field of *criticism* leave the argument for the essential truth of Christianity untouched. Whether or not Moses was the author of

the Pentateuch; whether or not the Book of Isaiah consists of two portions, one by a pre-exilian, the other by a post-exilian, writer; whether or not the prophet Daniel was the author of the book which bears his name; whether or not St. John was the author of the Gospel which bears *his* name; whether the four Gospels are or are not free from any important discrepancies—nevertheless the divine origin of the Christian religion may remain firmly established. Its truth or falsity is *not* bound up with any of these or similar questions. Unhappily they have been discussed as well by Christians as by unbelievers, as if the very citadel of the Christian faith must stand or fall with the issue here involved. And so the faith of multitudes has been shaken, and the peace and comfort of thousands have been disturbed, by this confounding of issues which are really distinct.*

4. I am firmly convinced, then, that the champions of the Christian faith ought to concentrate their

* "Even if the apostles and evangelists had no special inspiration, yet, if we admit their care and fidelity, we may trust to their testimony, and so accept their teaching as true. So, then, even if we were driven to take the lowest view of inspiration, we are not bound to give up our faith. External evidence must almost of necessity begin by taking low ground. It must treat nothing as certain until it is proved. . . . We need not throw away all faith if we should be led to think that some books of the Old Testament are only historical records collected by Jewish antiquarians, and bound up with

defense upon the one supreme issue, Was Jesus of Nazareth a superhuman man? Was he the manifestation of God to men in the sphere of time? Was he God manifest in the flesh? And was God in Christ reconciling the world unto himself? We should refuse to be drawn away from this central position in our defense of the Christian faith. We should set all minor issues on one side until this chiefest and greatest issue is determined.

I do not mean that we should not study those other questions to which I have alluded, or that we should not discuss them with those individuals who have first been satisfied upon the capital point of the nature of the person of our Lord Jesus Christ. But I urge that this last question overshadows in importance all other questions, and that it ought to occupy the first place in the order of discussion.

Now, whether you agree or not in the position just taken that the integrity of the faith, in its essential elements at least, is independent of the result of

the writings of prophets. . . . All this might be, and yet God may have spoken by holy men of old, and afterward more fully by his Son. Some Christian controversialists, who take high ground themselves, write as if they thought that Christianity was not worth defending unless it was defended exactly on their principles. The minds of the young men especially are sometimes greatly endangered by this means. . . . Now we may surely begin by saying that the question of inspiration is, within certain limits, a question *internal* to Christianity."—BISHOP HAROLD BROWNE, "Aids to Faith."

all questions of biblical criticism, or of agreement with science, or of inspiration itself, I urge, in *any* case, the great importance of observing the *order* of argument here insisted on.

There can be no dispute or difference of opinion among thoughtful students who "discern the signs of the times" in which we live, that the *first* question to be settled between believers and unbelievers, the first, also, to be determined by any man who is in doubt of the truth of the Christian religion, has reference to the person of Christ. The champions of the two opposing camps are agreed as to this. Thus Strauss has said: "The debate as to the truth of Christianity has at last narrowed itself into one as to the personality of its founder." And the great Christian theologian and historian, Dorner, has said: "The energies of all parties engaged in this conflict are gathered ever more and more around the person of Christ, as the central point at which the matter must be determined."

Our aim as Christian teachers is not controversial success, or victory in argument, but to lead men to Christ, to bring them to perceive in him the Son of God and the Saviour of the world. If we can accomplish this we shall have won our greatest triumph and gained our highest reward.

And our aim as inquirers concerning the Christian religion ought to be the same—to gain a saving

knowledge of Christ, the author and finisher of our faith.

If, then, men come to us with objections directed against the authenticity of the books of the Bible, or against the scientific or historical accuracy of the Old Testament, or against the harmony of the Gospels, or against any particular doctrine of the Christian theology, we stop them at once with the question, "*What think ye of Christ?*" Have you investigated *that* and come to any definite and final conclusion on the subject? If you have, and if your conclusion is that he was *not* the Son of God and the Saviour of the world, then it is quite useless to discuss any subordinate question, such as the accuracy of Moses, or the authenticity of St. John's Gospel, or the doctrine of Eschatology. If, on the other hand, you have not yet arrived at any conclusion in regard to the great issue presented by the personality of Jesus of Nazareth, then obviously *that* is the question to be considered and discussed between us.

II.

THE THEISTIC FOUNDATION.

"Πάντες γὰρ ἄνθρωποι περὶ Θεῶν ἔχουσιν ὑπόληψιν."—ARISTOTLE.

"If the student begins with asking, Why am I a Christian? he is forced back on the question, Why am I a theist? For Christianity presupposes the existence of God, and declares that he has revealed himself in redemptive action. . . . And when he asks, Why am I a theist? he is forced back on questions which reach to the profoundest depths of human thought. . . . Every theory of knowledge which is the intellectual basis of atheism involves in its essence complete agnosticism or universal skepticism. . . . If man cannot know God he cannot know anything. Conversely, the existence of God is essential to the possibility of rational knowledge. . . . The reality of scientific knowledge depends ultimately on the reality of the existence of God as the Absolute Reason energizing in the universe, and the primary ground of all that is. . . . Ultimately the question with the atheist is not whether man can know God, but whether he can know anything rationally and scientifically."—SAMUEL HARRIS, D.D., LL.D.

"This universe . . . could have been constructed, *was* constructed, only in reason, for reason, and by reason; and therefore everywhere, from the smallest particle to the largest system, molded and modeled and inhabited BY DESIGN."—PROFESSOR STIRLING.

II.

THE THEISTIC FOUNDATION.

"God hath not left himself without witness."—Acts xiv. 17.

THE Christian apologist cannot (as I pointed out in my preliminary lecture) assume the existence of a personal God as the basis of his argument. That, to many in our day, is the fundamental difficulty of belief—the crucial question of apologetics. Is there indeed a Being of infinite intelligence and power and benevolence and holiness, who made the world and all that it contains, and to whom man is accountable? Much of the thought of our time challenges this belief, or else denies that we have any convincing proof of the existence of such a Being, any firm basis for such a faith; so that, though it may not be confidently affirmed that there is no personal God, yet neither may we with good reason affirm that there is.

I shall therefore, before proceeding with the main subject of these lectures, endeavor to give an outline —my limits will permit no more—of the argument for Christian theism.

Let it be premised that upon a subject of this

nature *demonstrative* evidence such as the mathematician demands, or such as the physicist seeks in his experiments, is not to be expected. We might as well ask a mathematical demonstration of the duty of speaking the truth, or of loving father and mother, or of helping the needy. Equally inapplicable are the scientific tests which are applied in verifying theories that pertain to material things. No, the only evidence which may legitimately be demanded in this case is that which is termed moral, circumstantial, probable. But evidence of this kind may be as satisfactory and convincing in its sphere as demonstrative evidence in the sphere of mathematics or of physical science.

Let it be also observed that we are chiefly, if not exclusively, concerned to exhibit the argument for belief in a personal God, and not for mere theism, and that for two reasons: first, because our chief antagonists in this age are not absolute atheists, but rather pantheists and agnostics; and secondly, because a mere philosophical theism which denies or cannot recognize the personal attributes of the Deity is removed by an almost infinite distance from the God of Christianity, who is, as Niebuhr said, "heart to heart."

The chief arguments from which the existence of a personal God may be confidently inferred are these five:

1st. The argument from the general consent of mankind in that belief.

2d. The argument from effect to cause.

3d. The argument from design.

4th. The argument from the moral nature of man.

5th. The argument from the manifestation of a personal God in Jesus of Nazareth: in his character, in his teaching, in his influence upon mankind.

In all these directions "*God hath not left himself without witness.*" In each of them the witness is clear; and the cumulative weight of the five arguments combined ought to be irresistible to every candid and open mind.

1. With regard to the first a few words must suffice. It is undoubtedly true that religion in some form is practically universal among mankind, and has been, so far as we can ascertain, from the beginning. Without challenging the alleged instances (and they are very doubtful indeed) of the discovery of tribes of men among whom no conception of Deity has been found, we may certainly affirm that belief in a Deity, or deities, has been, and is, so nearly universal among the families of the earth as to justify the inference that there is something in the constitution of human nature which suggests the idea to man, or else that it is one of the primitive beliefs (however originally obtained) which has been handed down from father to

son from the beginning of the race until now. Grotesque and degraded as are the forms in which this belief often appears, it is possible to trace features in them all which point to an original universal belief in a personal God of power and goodness. Polytheistic and other degraded ideas of the Deity are evidently departures from the original. These are not universal. The common features in which the manifold forms of religion coincide testify to an original universal belief such as just alleged.

Now the common consent of mankind in a belief in the Deity goes far to establish a presumption in its favor, and this presumption is transformed into a strong probability when we consider the existence in men in general of an intuitive or quasi-intuitive belief in the existence of God. A distinguished scientist of our generation,* an earnest Christian and an ardent evolutionist, affirms that "theism neither requires nor admits of proof"; it is "universal, necessary, intuitive." For ourselves, we do not rigorously insist on the belief in God as intuitive, but it certainly appears that in the generality of men there is a God-consciousness just as there is a self-consciousness. It is true that some men seem to lack this God-consciousness, just as there are cases of color-blindness, or even of partial insensibility to moral distinctions. But in such instances

* Professor Le Conte.

we may well demand whether the faculty has not been atrophied by neglect; whether the eyes of the soul that once did perceive God have not been put out; whether this inability to recognize the existence of God is permanent or only temporary; whether the God-consciousness be not dormant rather than dead or non-existent.*

Man is a religious animal. Worship would seem almost a necessity of his being. If he drive it out at the front door, it will return at the back door or through the window. Auguste Comte founded his elaborate philosophical system on a denial of God and of religion. He affirmed that human knowledge is confined to phenomena; of causes we can know nothing. Hence of a First Cause we can make no affirmation; it is not a subject of our knowledge; we know nothing of its existence. But so imperious is the demand of the human heart or the human reason, or both, for religion, that this proud philosopher, after overthrowing, as he claimed, the

* "For, after all, such a helper of men outside humanity the Truth will not allow us to see. The dim and shadowy outlines of the superhuman Deity fade slowly away from before us, and as the mist of his presence floats aside we perceive with greater and greater clearness the shape of a yet grander and nobler figure, of him who made all gods and shall unmake them. From the dim dawn of history and from the inmost depths of every soul the face of our Father *man* looks out upon us with the fire of eternal youth in his eyes, and says: 'Before Jehovah was, I am.'"—PROFESSOR CLIFFORD.

foundations of man's faith in God, is himself compelled to propound a religion which he calls the religion of humanity, and to institute a church with an elaborate ritual and an order of priests upon whom are conferred powers as exclusive as those claimed by the priesthood of the Church of Rome. Comte overturns the worship of God only to substitute the worship of the human race!

Buddhism furnishes another example of the same principle; for although in its primitive form it was an atheistic philosophy and not a religion, yet it has almost universally clothed itself with the forms of religion, with its ritual, its temples, its priesthood, its idols.

Thus, taking a broad survey of the history of the religious ideas of mankind, it may be affirmed that there has been a general consent in the belief in a God of power and goodness, and that through this very significant fact "God hath not left himself without witness."*

* "It is the peculiar characteristic of first principles that they are the most difficult of all others to prove, or even to defend in argument, but that they commend themselves instinctively to common sense or to the general apprehension of sound minds. . . . Their real strength lies in their being the true interpretation of a natural instinct. . . . In proportion as the conscience is quickened it is natural for men to believe in a personal God who judges them. . . . Modern philosophy has committed something like an act of suicide in respect to this question of the existence of God. For it con-

2. I pass to the second argument, that which is derived from the principle of causation. The human mind argues confidently from effect to cause. It is an axiom of thought that every effect must have a cause. No law is more universal than this. Its validity is at once recognized. It involves an ultimate principle beyond which the human mind cannot go. We can never be more certain of anything than we are of this.

Now the universe is an effect, or rather a complicated series of effects. It must have had a cause. That cause is God. We trace indeed a series of causes—a chain of causation. But our minds compel us to believe that that series must have had a first term; that chain must have had a beginning. An infinite series of causes without any First Cause is inconceivable.* It is a postulate of reason that there can be nothing without a cause, and at the same time reason refuses to rest in the thought of cause

fesses, or rather asserts, that precisely the same difficulties apply to a belief in the substantiality of the soul itself. . . . Belief in God has been imbedded from the earliest centuries in the deepest moral convictions of our race."—HENRY WACE, M.A.

* "Geology," says Professor Le Conte, "demands a beginning for man, a beginning for organic species, for the organic kingdom, for the kosmos itself. Thus geology negatives the idea of an infinite series of similar contrivances." "Science, . . . tracing up phenomena from cause to cause, must reach somewhere the more direct agency of a First Cause."—"Religion and Science."

lying back of cause in an infinite series of causes without at last coming to the *causa causans*, the Cause of causes. The stream must have a source, the river must take its rise somewhere. The many-branching stream of effects which we call the universe must have its source, its fountain-head. That fountain, that Cause of causes, is God. He is the great First Cause, the uncaused cause. Such, stated in briefest terms, is the argument from causation. Let me remind you that the principle on which it rests is among the axioms of natural science.

When, fifty years ago, Adams and Leverrier completed independently of each other that remarkable series of mathematical calculations which led them to declare their belief that in a certain definite locality in infinite space there must exist a hitherto unknown planet, what was the foundation upon which they rested the splendid superstructure of their reasoning, whereby they were enabled first confidently to assert the existence of a new world and then to search it out in the hidden depths of the trackless ether? It was this simple principle that every observed effect must have an adequate cause. There was an irregularity in the orbit of Uranus. Some hidden force, then, must disturb his motion and deflect his path among the starry fields of the heavens. There must be a cause for that observed deflection, and the cause must be adequate. Some body must

be exercising an attraction upon Herschel's planet in that particular part of his orbit; and it must be large enough to draw him that far out of his course. Neither the French nor the English mathematician had seen the new planet; and yet they felt sure of its existence, and in a certain part of the heavens, before the astronomers had in obedience to their suggestion turned their telescopes upon the fields of space in search of it.

Precisely in the same way the believer in a personal God may feel confident that he exists and that he is possessed of certain attributes. "No man hath seen God at any time;" we have not the evidence of our *senses* that he exists—we have not *demonstrative* evidence—but we have *sufficient* evidence from which we *infer* his existence as certainly as those two mathematicians inferred the existence and the locality of the planet Neptune.

Let me further call your attention to the fact that the force of this argument is acknowledged by some of the most distinguished representatives of agnosticism. Hear Mr. Herbert Spencer: "Respecting the nature of the universe, we seem committed to certain unavoidable conclusions. The objects and actions surrounding us, not less than the phenomena of our own consciousness, compel us to ask a cause; in our search for a cause we discover no resting-place until we arrive at the hypothesis of a First Cause; and

we have no alternative but to regard this First Cause as Infinite and Absolute."* And again: "It is absolutely certain that we are in the presence of an Infinite Eternal Energy from which all things proceed." We may therefore fairly claim that the validity of the argument from causation is certified by one of the foremost apostles of science, himself one of our opponents.

Wherein, then, is the difference between the conclusions of Mr. Herbert Spencer and ours as Christian theists? Obviously that he stops with the affirmation of the existence of an Infinite Eternal *Energy*, while we go on to affirm that this Infinite and Eternal Energy is or proceeds from an Infinite and Eternal Person, in whom there must exist intelligence, wisdom, and goodness, as well as power. The only question to be determined is whether Mr. Spencer can rightly stop short of the recognition of this personal God; whether reason, which has led him thus far, does not lead him a step farther, even to the conclusion of Christian theism. He demurs to that conclusion on the ground that this Infinite and Absolute First Cause is "inscrutable," and hence there can be no science concerning it. But it has been answered with great force that if we can have a science of matter, which Mr. Spencer declares to be in its ultimate nature as incomprehensible as

* "First Principles," chap. ii.

space and time, "why should the fact of God being 'inscrutable' preclude the possibility of our having some knowledge of him and arranging that knowledge in scientific order? If we can learn a great deal about the material creation without being able to comprehend its 'ultimate nature,' why may we not learn a great deal about the Creator while we confess that he is past finding out?"* "If it is 'absolutely certain,' as Mr. Herbert Spencer assures us, that behind the veil of visible phenomena there is the presence of an Energy which is Infinite, Eternal, and from which all things proceed, reason suggests at least, if it does not demand, the additional attributes of intelligence and will; and intelligence and will imply personality."†

Thus again we see that "God hath not left himself without witness," in that he has implanted in every rational mind this great principle of causation, which physical science continually builds upon, and which the agnostic himself recognizes to such an extent that logically he should throw away his agnosticism and confess with Christian theism, "I believe in God the Father Almighty." On the other hand, we on our part should join with the agnostic in acknowledging that though we can be assured of God's existence and of many of his attributes, and above all

* Maccoll, "Christianity in Relation to Science and Morals," p. 12. † *Idem*, p. 14.

of his glorious revelation in Christ, yet there is a sense in which he is truly "inscrutable"—that we see but "parts of his ways"; that, in the language of a great theologian, "our soundest knowledge is to know that we know him not as he is, neither can know him; and our safest eloquence concerning him is our silence, when we confess without confession that his glory is inexplicable, his greatness above our capacity."

3. The third great argument for the being of a personal God is derived from the observed adaptation of means to ends in the universe, or, in other words, the argument from design. It has long been the fashion to sneer at this argument, and to speak of the view it presents as the "carpenter's theory of the universe." But I am confident that its validity remains unshaken—nay, that it has greater force in our age than ever before. Let me briefly state it. It is not a chaos, but a kosmos, which we see around us, and of which we form a part. Things are not thrown together haphazard; they are arranged in a marvelous order, the beauty of which and its harmonious and delicate adjustments, and its complex parts, and its wonderful interconnection, are revealed to the men of this generation as they were never revealed before, because all the magnificent discoveries of modern science do but unfold that order in greater fullness and in greater glory.

But what does this order imply? What do these adaptations suggest? What inference are we compelled to draw respecting the origin, or rather the originator, of the universe when we see it arranged in so wonderful an order?

Can such a complicated system as this, with its nicely adjusted parts, with its orderly arrangement, have originated in unconscious and unintelligent forces? Is it, or is it not, a necessity of our thinking to hold that orderliness and arrangement and adaptation are the result of intelligence? I hold that it is; and therefore I maintain that reason compels us to believe that this universe is the result of intelligence and that it is full of purpose in all its parts. Suppose some great painting were found on a desert and uninhabited island equaling the Sistine Madonna or the Transfiguration in artistic beauty; and suppose no one could give any account of its origin, could not trace it to any artist in any age, what would be thought of the man who should set up a theory that no human hand had painted it, but that it was the result of the forces of nature; that the paints were mixed and applied to the canvas by the wind and the rain, suppose, or by some other natural agent; that these unintelligent forces painted the landscape, and grouped the figures, and put color in the cheek and fire in the eye, and gave unity to the whole? And yet what painting or sculpture or work

of man's art ever contained so many elements of design and arrangement as we recognize in the panorama of nature, which some wise men would persuade us is *not* the expression of intelligence and purpose? And why, if we infer an intelligent designer in the one case, are we not equally to infer it in the other? Take another illustration. If you find a granite bowlder lying on the surface of the earth in a region where no granite formations exist, you infer that it was brought there by some extraneous force. Man may have brought it, or as in some of the valleys of Switzerland, it may have been borne upon the icy shoulders of a glacier from some distant spot. But if you find a number of huge monoliths (as is the case at Stonehenge) arranged in a manifest order—in the form, say, of an ellipse—and another series tracing a circle intersecting the ellipse, you go further and infer that here is evidence of intelligence, and not mere blind force, like the glacier or the avalanche. You are sure that the hand and the mind of *man* are traceable here. You begin to inquire also the purpose of this arrangement. Man does not undertake such immense labor capriciously or without an object in view. The antiquarians are not yet agreed in their reading of the riddle of Stonehenge, but they *are* agreed that those great stones had *some* purpose.

But nine miles from Stonehenge stands the splen-

did pile of Salisbury Cathedral. Its delicate spire is visible from the former place. What a superb triumph of consecrated genius! What a complete embodiment of the thought of worship! No question here of the purpose of the structure!

Now, what would be thought of the man who should deny any purpose in such a building and maintain that it was the result of the fortuitous combination of pieces of stone piled together in these graceful and majestic proportions, and with that harmonious order and nice adaptation of parts, by the unintelligent forces of nature? Would he not be deemed a madman? But would his thought be one whit more absurd than is the opinion of those who maintain that this magnificent universe is not the result of omnipotent power and wisdom and purpose, but of blind, unreasoning force?

But there is more than order and intelligence stamped upon the world. We find *adaptation* of means to end. The earth is fitted in a wonderful order to support human life. Reason will not allow us to entertain the supposition that it is a mere chance that the earth bears the fruits and the food adapted to the use of man; or that his body is adapted to receive and assimilate food by accident; or that fuel produces heat; or that the earth is stored with exhaustless supplies of coal also by accident. We see the birds fitted to fly, with wings so

wondrously constructed that no human skill has yet been able to imitate them; and we see the fish fitted to live in the water; and we argue from all this with assured certainty that there is a wise Creator by whom all these subtle and delicate adjustments have been perfected. The force of this argument is felt even by speculative unbelievers. John Stuart Mill confessed its validity. David Hume, as he walked home one beautiful evening with a friend, exclaimed, "No one can look up to that sky without feeling that it must have been put in order by an intelligent Being." In truth the only device by which its force can be evaded is to suppose—and, incredible as it seems, the hypothesis has actually been put forth—that the particles of matter themselves possess intelligence. But in that case, the difficulty would only be put a step farther back, for it would be necessary to ask, Whence came these intelligent particles? And whether is easier—to believe in one God of infinite power and intelligence creating and arranging the universe, or to believe in multitudinous intelligent particles of matter (self-originated, if there be no God) fashioning this marvelous and beautiful order of the world?

I do not forget in what I have said above that it is asserted by many that the argument from design is ground to powder by the now widely accepted theory of evolution. But that assertion cannot be

substantiated, as can be shown in a few words without entering upon the discussion of so vast a subject as the theory in question brings up. Observe, then, that many of the most able and thorough-going evolutionists remain firm theists, even devout Christians. For them the argument from design not only loses none of its force, but is even enhanced in power and beauty by that hypothesis. They feel, with Charles Kingsley, that it is only cause for greater wonder if indeed God "is not only so wise that he can make all things, but so much wiser even than that, that he can make all things make themselves." No matter how long the process of evolution, they find at last behind all infinite intelligence wisdom and goodness. No matter how natural the processes by which through "natural selection" the world or man may have been developed, they reach finally the supernatural cause—the will and purpose and wisdom of an infinite Creator; endowing matter with these marvelous capacities; giving the life-cell, for example, the power to grow, to assimilate nourishment, to produce other cells like itself; and presiding over the development of life at every step, directing "the multitudinous divergencies of the original life-germ in the course of its development towards all the innumerable phases of life which we behold." They see in the wondrous combination of beauty and utility in nature the manifestation of a divine purpose and

a divine arrangement, not a whit the less because the *process* of its development is natural and extends through an almost inconceivably long period of time.

Those who assert that the argument from design is overthrown by the doctrine of evolution ought to remember that that doctrine *does not account for the process which it supposes*—that it makes no attempt to explain the *source or genesis* of evolution—for Darwin himself admitted that his theory did not pretend to be a solution of the *origin* of the universe. So that it may well be said that "without the hypothesis of a presiding mind directing its processes, the doctrine of evolution is a greater mystery than that of special creation."*

On the other hand, theologians should never forget that it is only in its antitheistic form that the doctrine of evolution conflicts with our belief in the living God.

On any intelligible theory of the universe, then, it appears that "God hath not left himself without witness, in that he did good and gave men rain from heaven and fruitful seasons"; for again, in the language of the Apostle, "the invisible things [of God] are seen from the creation of the world, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and divinity."

* Maccoll, "Christianity in Relation to Science and Morals," p. 21.

4. The fourth great argument for the being of God is derived from *the moral nature of man.* The considerations already adduced prove his existence, his power, his wisdom, and they also *imply* his goodness and his other moral attributes; for it is not only intelligence, but surely also benevolence, that is written across the face of nature.

But when we consider the moral nature of man, the argument for the moral attributes of God is direct and conclusive.

Man is a free agent. He has the great prerogative of choice. He is largely a self-determining being. He believes himself free. He feels his accountability for his choice. He acknowledges his responsibility as a moral being. He holds his fellow-man similarly responsible and similarly free. And not all the fine webs of sophistry ever woven by speculative deniers of this freedom and this responsibility have changed the general conviction of mankind or altered the laws based upon that conviction of responsibility for conduct. Now study this moral nature of man, and ask yourself, Whence came it? Who fashioned it? Is it, *could* it be, the result of natural selection, of a purely physical evolution, with no personal Being behind that evolution? Is any inference more certain than that such a being as man *must* have proceeded from a Being likewise free, likewise moral? Men do not gather grapes of

thorns or figs of thistles. The stream cannot rise higher than the fountain. The evolution cannot go beyond the involution. The Creator of man (and he must have had a creator, or, if you prefer it, a cause) must have been possessed *at least* of those moral qualities which are found in him. Every moral attribute that exists in man must have its higher counterpart in God. Whence, for example, came the sense of *justice* in the human breast? Was it inherent in protoplasm? Is it a quality of *matter?* Or did it come from God—was it implanted by him? And is it in man an image and reflex of a quality *in God?* Here again the great principle of causation comes into play. There must be an *adequate* cause for such a result or product as the moral nature of man; and we affirm that a mere impersonal energy, or a mere material force destitute of volition or purpose, is not adequate to produce that nature; that as certainly as it is true that *ex nihilo nihil fit,* so certain is it that no merely material evolution could have produced a free, self-determining, responsible being such as man; that whatever the cause that made him what he is, it must at least have possessed those qualities which we recognize in him. In other words, only a personal Being possessing freedom and will and a moral nature could have been the author and maker of man.

The universe in its primitive condition contained,

so the antitheistic evolutionist tells us, nothing whatever but matter, force, and motion. Well, upon that hypothesis it is impossible to conceive how consciousness or freedom or conscience could ever have been developed. Yet these all exist and cohere in man, and hence the conclusion is unavoidable that the hypothesis is insufficient to account for the facts and therefore must be abandoned. There must have been more in the universe than the materialistic hypothesis allows: there must have been a personal Being, free, moral, spiritual, to account for such a product as the moral nature of man. Mr. Herbert Spencer finds that there *must* have been an infinite and absolute cause for the universe: he is "absolutely certain that we are in the presence of an Infinite Eternal Energy, from which all things proceed." He reasons as Adams and Leverrier reasoned about the unseen planet that *must* exist to account for certain phenomena. We reason in just the same way and with as complete certitude to the conclusion that to account for the phenomena which we find in man—his personality, his freedom, his conscience, his religious nature, his spiritual aspirations, his innate perception and approval of the true, the beautiful, and the good—there *must* be a Being who is free and pure and good, a personal Being who is spiritual and moral, in whom that "Infinite Eternal Energy" of our philosopher abides.

My limits do not permit me to elaborate the argument, but enough, I hope, has been said to show that here also "God hath not left himself without witness"—that he has given in the human conscience, in the whole moral nature of man, incontestable and sufficient evidence of his attributes.

You are no doubt aware that serious objections are raised to this argument, as well as to that from design, upon the ground that we find imperfection and evil as well as good in the world and in man. The tragic aspect of things in the realm of nature and of human history so impresses some minds that the goodness and benevolence which the Christian theist reads therein are even overshadowed. The pessimist reads Machiavelianism rather than beneficence in the face of nature. "This world the creation of a God!" exclaims Schopenhauer. "Say rather of a devil!" And Mr. John Stuart Mill declared that "if any man were to act as nature is acting every day, he would in any civilized community be hanged."

The full statement and refutation of objections of this class would carry me far beyond my necessary limits, and I must refer you to Canon Row's very able treatment of the whole subject.* I can only suggest one or two considerations of a very general character. The first is that the evil, the imperfec-

* "Christian Theism," chap. ix.

tion, and the suffering in the world are greatly exaggerated by writers of the class alluded to. A candid consideration will convince us that, *taken as a whole,* the phenomena of sentient life and the facts of experience indicate benevolence as well as skill in the Creator, and point to a great predominance of happiness over misery. Another reflection of great importance is that by far the largest part of suffering and sorrow and pain that exist in the world is the consequence of man's abuse of his freedom, and hence for this the Creator is not responsible.

Again, it must be considered that we know not how far the evils that afflict mankind may further be the work of Satan and his angels. Of still greater importance is it to remember that pain and other forms of human suffering are frequently the instruments of moral regeneration or of spiritual development, so that the noblest and most beautiful traits of character are produced by the things men call misfortunes and calamities. This ought to teach us that we may expect, as the final result of the present economy, "larger good because of evil." And finally, let it be always remembered that we are too narrow in our vision and too feeble in our capacity to sit in judgment on so vast an order as this boundless universe, or so infinite a scheme as the moral government of God. So much of it is plainly beneficent, that it is only the part of reason as well as faith to

suppose it would *all* be seen to be good if we knew all the facts and could see their true relations.

When, in 1877, the planet Mars seemed to return upon its track and make for a considerable time a retrograde motion, it would have been very unscientific to conclude in advance of the discovery that this retrograde movement was only apparent (being due to the peculiar position and relation at that time of our earth to the planet), that the laws that govern the planetary motions were in this instance set aside and the unity and harmony of the kosmos broken.* It was more scientific to have faith in nature, and to suppose there was some yet undiscovered explanation consistent with the unity and harmony of cosmical law.

And equally unwise and unreasonable would it be to conclude against the goodness or the wisdom of the Creator because of the *apparent* and *unexplained* contradictions to those attributes which we find in nature. It is the part of reason as well as faith to "trust the larger hope," to rely upon the persistence of the forces of benevolence and wisdom, and to attribute the apparent inconsistencies to the imperfection of our faculties or the errors of our observation. Well may we ask, with the great laureate of England, lately taken from the world,

* See "The Story of the Heavens," by Sir Robert Ball, pp. 182, 183.

. . . "And he, shall he,

"Man, her last work, who seem'd so fair,
Such splendid purpose in his eyes,
Who roll'd the psalm to wintry skies,
Who built him fanes of fruitless prayer,

"Who trusted God was love indeed
And love Creation's final law—
Tho' Nature, red in tooth and claw
With ravine, shriek'd against his creed—

"Who loved, who suffer'd countless ills,
Who battled for the True, the Just,
Be blown about the desert dust,
Or seal'd within the iron hills?

"No more? A monster then, a dream,
A discord. Dragons of the prime,
That tear each other in their slime,
Were mellow music match'd with him."

5. It remains only to consider the last of our arguments for the existence of a personal God, that, viz., which is drawn from a consideration of the divine attributes which appear in the person and teaching and work of Jesus Christ. This constitutes a distinct source of proof, and it is perhaps the clearest and strongest of all. Jesus of Nazareth is a revelation of the divine. His character, his discourses, his influence on mankind, cannot be catalogued among merely human phenomena. "God is manifest in Christ;" so that, apart from all other evidences of the being of God, there is in him a clear unfolding of the Deity.

To exhibit this will be the chief purpose of the following lectures, and hence I must refer you to them for the completion of my argument for Christian theism, only repeating in conclusion that each branch of the argument lends force to the other, and their cumulative weight ought to be irresistible to any candid mind.

III.

THE UNIQUE PERSONALITY OF CHRIST.

"WHATEVER else may be taken away from us by rational criticism, Christ is still left, a unique figure, not more unlike all his precursors than all his followers."—JOHN STUART MILL.

"His person and his work are the writings which he inscribed in broad characters on the history of mankind, and the work of his Spirit on the heart is the epistle which he is day by day inscribing in ineffaceable characters within us. . . . Our faith, then, does not depend upon writings and their truth and genuineness or ungenuineness, but upon facts which belong to history, and upon effects produced within our hearts." —LUTHARDT.

"La position que Jésus s'attribuait était celle d'un Être surhumain, et il voulait qu'on le regardât comme ayant avec Dieu un rapport plus élevé que celui des autres hommes."—RENAN.

"MM. Pecaut and Renan make painful efforts to extract from the records of this life some appearance of the stain of imperfections."—KEIM.

"Let us listen to the conclusion to which the study of the synoptic Gospels has led so profound a skeptical philosopher as the late J. S. Mill. He is of opinion that they contain beyond all doubt an actual delineation of the character and teaching of Jesus, and that it is impossible that either the one or the other can have been an invention of his followers." —C. A. ROW, M.A.

"The energies of all parties engaged in this conflict are gathered ever more and more around the Person of Christ as the central point at which the matter must be determined." —DORNER.

III.

THE UNIQUE PERSONALITY OF CHRIST.

"And Nathanael said unto him, Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth? Philip saith unto him, Come and see." —JOHN i. 46.

IN my preliminary lecture I urged several considerations which seem to me indispensable to the intelligent and effective study of the evidences of Christianity.

The first was that we should realize, *in limine*, that the assault directed against Christianity in our time proceeds from a different quarter and is based upon different principles from that which was so decisively repulsed by the great Christian apologists of the eighteenth century, and hence that we must not expect to find the arguments of Butler and Paley, powerful as they were and valuable as they will be for all time, adequate to meet the exigencies of the situation in this the last decade of the nineteenth century. The Christian army of defense must change front to meet the change in the enemy's line of attack, and it must erect its fortifications with a view to the artillery and the projectiles which are brought to bear against it to-day.

I proceeded next to point out that what we seek to defend and establish as Christian apologists is not any system of theology or of Church doctrine, however important, but rather Christianity in its fundamental and essential facts and principles. Our task is quite apart from that of the theologian or the Church historian. We are set to defend the citadel of the faith, and we deem it the part of wisdom to concentrate our strength upon it alone. If we can make good the divine mission of Jesus Christ as the Saviour of the world, our task will have been well performed.

I then insisted that in accordance with this principle we should disentangle our discussion of many of the questions often wrongly identified with the evidences of Christianity, and keep it close to the one supreme issue involved. In this connection you were reminded that even the inspiration of the Bible is not essential to the argument for the truth of Christianity as a divine revelation and a divine power for the salvation of men.* Finally I urged the great importance of the *order* of the Christian argument. The *first* question is, What think ye of Christ? Approach and grapple with that first. Re-

* Baxter remarks that the old fathers, when they disputed with the heathens, did first prove the truth of the Christian religion before they came to prove the divine authority of the Scriptures.

fuse to turn aside to discuss the objections of certain scientific men, or the questions involved in biblical criticism, or the difficulties of any of the Christian doctrines. Unless Christ is recognized as the Son of God, all other beliefs will be vain. If he *is* so recognized, the one thing *needful* is attained. Therefore rigidly adhere to the *order* of the argument. *First* settle the question as to the *person* of Jesus. Then you can enter upon other and less vital questions. Both parties to this great argument are agreed that the fundamental question at issue relates to the person of Christ.

Now in meeting this great issue, upon which hangs the truth of the Christian religion and the validity of the Christian hope, we shall not put the miracles in the forefront to bear the chief burden of the argument, as has often been done by Christian apologists. We shall not argue thus: Christ wrought miracles, therefore he was the Son of God. But rather we shall urge weighty reasons for believing in his superhuman personality independent of the truth and reality of the miracles he is alleged to have performed. Paley admits "that the ancient Christian advocates did not insist upon the miracles in argument so frequently as we should have done. It was their lot to contend with notions of magical agency, against which the mere production of the facts was not sufficient for the convincing of their

adversaries; I do not know whether they themselves thought it quite decisive of the controversy." * There exist equally valid reasons in our day why we should not make the miracles our first or chiefest argument for Christianity. Our argument is this: the character of Jesus is superhuman; the teaching of Jesus is superhuman; the work of Jesus in history and in the individual soul is superhuman. Therefore he was himself superhuman—he was the Christ, the Son of God, and as such it was natural that he should work miracles. Instead of proving Christ by the miracles, we prove the miracles by Christ.

This method of reasoning was foreshadowed long ago by a contemporary of Paley, Soame Jenyns, whose "View of the Internal Evidence of the Christian Religion" is one of the most powerful arguments ever made in defense of the faith.† In the introduction the author says: "To prove the truth of the Christian religion, I prefer to begin by showing the internal marks of divinity which are stamped upon it, because on this the credibility of the prophecies and miracles in great measure depends; for if we have once reason to be convinced that this relig-

* "Evidences," Part III., chap. v.

† It is stated upon good authority that Patrick Henry, the celebrated orator of the American Revolution, who had in early life entertained skeptical opinions, was fully satisfied of the truth of the Christian religion by that little treatise.

ion is derived from a supernatural origin, prophecies and miracles will become so far from being incredible that it will be highly probable that a supernatural revelation should be foretold and enforced by supernatural means."

We believe that it is possible to show, from a consideration of the character, the teaching, and the work of Jesus, valid and sufficient reasons for being convinced that the Christian religion is derived from a superhuman source, without assuming either the inspiration of the New Testament record or the actual occurrence of the miracles there related. In the present lecture I shall present the argument from *the character of Christ.* We affirm that it is so unique, so sublime in its moral grandeur, that it evidently stands on a different plane from any other character in history; it is so far exalted above all the other characters of history that the only rational account to give of it is that it represents a superhuman Person. "As no proof besides the light is necessary to show that the sun shines, so we shall find that Jesus proves himself by his own self-evidence. The simple inspection of his life and character will suffice to show that he cannot be classified with mankind (man though he be) any more than what we call his miracles can be classified with mere natural events."*

* Bushnell, "Nature and the Supernatural," p. 277.

Observe, I am now speaking only of the *character* of Christ as we see it delineated in the Gospels. Whatever be the origin of the Gospels, whatever be the reality that lies behind them and produced them, there is the sublime character they represent. We can all see it. It is a palpable fact, as plain and certain as the sun in the heavens. We look into the mirror and we see our own faces reflected. We look into the depths of Mirror Lake in the Yosemite, and we see the wondrous picture of the great cliffs and peaks of the entire valley, distincter and infinitely more beautiful than any picture from the hand of man. Even so we look into these four Gospels, and we see there the face and form of Jesus, a character unique and sublime beyond any other that the records of history or the pages of fiction contain. That the character here delineated is such as I describe, it is hardly necessary to prove, for it is almost universally admitted. Some people are color-blind. In some rare instances human beings are insensible to the beauty of the world. And so there may possibly be individuals insensible to the beauty and sublimity of the character of Christ. Of such I need take no account here. But certain it is that the great body even of unbelievers have felt the spell and the power of that life and character. Thus Ernest Renan says: "Jesus Christ is the highest of those columns which show to man his origin and

his destiny. . . . In him is centered all that there is in our nature of what is good and what is elevated." And John Stuart Mill: "Whatever else may be taken away from us by rational criticism, Christ is still left, a unique figure, not more unlike all his precursors than all his followers." * Another unbeliever, the author of a brilliant though unscholarly book, "Supernatural Religion," sees in Christ one who, "surpassing in his sublime simplicity the moral grandeur of Sakya Mouni, and putting to the blush . . . the teaching of Socrates and Plato, . . . presented the rare spectacle of a life, so far as we can estimate it, uniformly noble and consistent with his own lofty principles." And Mr. Lecky, whose position as an unbeliever is unequivocal, nevertheless wrote these remarkable words: "It was reserved for Christianity to present to the world an ideal character which through all the changes of eighteen centuries has inspired the hearts of men with an impassioned love, and has shown itself capable of acting on all ages, nations, temperaments, and conditions; has not only been the highest pattern of virtue, but the highest incentive to its practice; and has exerted so deep an influence that it may be truly said that the simple record of those short years of active life has done more to regenerate and to soften mankind

* "Essays on Religion," p. 253.

than all the disquisitions of philosophers and all the exhortations of moralists." *

Now the problem which here demands solution is, How are we to give a rational account of this wonderful portraiture which we find in the Gospels? Is it at last a true portrait of a real Person? Or is it an ideal picture, wholly legendary, or at any rate largely so?

If the latter, if the Jesus of the evangelists is in any large degree a legendary character, if the great leading traits of the person whose face and form is seen in these pages are ideal and not real, are a legendary formation and not a true portraiture, then we have indeed a strange series of phenomena before us. For first, we all know how difficult a thing it is to invent a character which shall be thoroughly consistent and harmonious with itself. Yet here is a character of perfect unity and consistency, as well as of extraordinary beauty and grandeur, produced by whom? By illiterate Galileans, Jews without culture, fishermen and publicans! Such were the evangelists, if the uniform tradition of the Church be true. If, however, this tradition be rejected, then this extraordinary literary phenomenon must be attributed to we know not whom. Surely men possessed of such unparalleled genius as was

* "History of Morality from Augustus to Charlemagne," vol. ii., p. 8.

requisite to the *creation* of such a character as that of Jesus should have left some impress upon the world—some record of themselves and their work! It was an historic age. Why have we no record of the writers whose genius surpassed that of all other writers of fiction that ever lived? But this is not the only literary marvel here. We have not one portrait only, but four, of Jesus of Nazareth. We have the Christ of Matthew, the Christ of Mark, the Christ of Luke, the Christ of John. Here they are —four studies, if you please, of the same face, each characterized by distinct individuality in the painter, and yet all harmonious. It is four pictures but only one Christ. In all the great features, of character there is complete harmony. How did this come to pass if the character was invented? Who is credulous enough to believe, who is irrational enough to give credence, even for a moment, to the supposition that four illiterate or unknown writers could have drawn each a separate picture of an imaginary character, and that that character should turn out the greatest and the most sublime ever portrayed, and that the four studies should be completely harmonious?

Even if the writers had compared notes and studiously labored to produce harmony in their several pictures, it would have been an unexampled achievement to have attained such complete success. But

a comparison of these four Gospels shows unmistakable evidence of the independence of the writers. This is now generally admitted. Had the writers composed their several biographies in concert they would never have left such apparent discrepancies lying on the surface as we find in the Gospels. But it is inconceivable that four men, writing independently, should have produced four harmonious ideal pictures, unless they were indeed painting from the same model.

Mr. Mill, to whom I have already referred, admits the force of these considerations. He says in the last of his posthumous essays: "It is no use to say that Christ, as exhibited in the Gospels, is not historical, and that we know not how much of what is admirable has been superadded by the tradition of his followers. The tradition of his followers suffices to have inserted any number of miracles, and *may* have inserted all the miracles he is reputed to have wrought. But who among his disciples or among their proselytes was capable of inventing the sayings ascribed to Jesus, or of imagining the life and character revealed in the Gospels? Certainly not the fishermen of Galilee, certainly not St. Paul, and still less the early Christian writers, in whom nothing is more evident than that the good which was in them was all derived, as they all professed that it was, from a higher source."

Let me call your attention to another peculiar feature of these four portraitures of Jesus. The writers do not describe Jesus. They make no comment on his sayings or his acts. They do not draw the likeness of the Man whose memoirs they preserve. There is no "formal delineation" of the character of Jesus in the Gospels. They do not praise him. They do not hold him up as an object of adoration or of imitation. They narrate his miracles without any expression of surprise or of admiration. They tell the story of his wondrous life absolutely without feeling. His marvelous self-sacrifice, his divine patience, his deep humility, his godlike calmness, his forgiveness of his enemies, his majestic silence and dignity under insult, are all related without comment, as if by spectators who had absolutely no interest in him or in the scenes they describe. Even the story of the crucifixion is told without any sign of condemnation of his murderers or of astonishment at the events described, and with no effort after effect.

And yet their narrative is admitted by friends and foes to be the most majestic ever penned, and the Man of whom they write the sublimest character the world has ever known. Without any art, without any effort, without any attempt at character-painting, they have delineated a character and a life which stands before us in unapproachable grandeur.

Without aiming at pathos or dramatic effect, they have set before us scenes which in these very features have never been equaled by any creations of the mightiest genius.

What is the explanation of these strange literary phenomena? There can be but one: these evangelists are simply putting down the true story of what happened. Their work is as unconscious as the work of the sun's rays in producing a photograph. The narrative is so wonderful because the scenes it describes were so unique and unexampled. The character their simple story delineates is so sublime and of such moral grandeur because the original was so.*

What now were some of the features of the character of Jesus? His childhood was absolutely pure. The evangelists tell us very little of his early years, but in those few delicate touches there is delineated "a holy thing," a child without guile, without weakness, without sin. No other great character of history is so described. Here is a feature of absolute originality.

I next call attention to his innocence. From beginning to end of those three short years, the record of which, as Mr. Lecky confesses, has done more to regenerate mankind than all the disquisitions of philosophers and all the precepts of moralists, he was without guile, a man of spotless innocence.

* Compare Row's "Bampton Lectures," pp. 179, 180.

"The Lamb of God" is one of the most characteristic of his titles. And yet this innocence was conjoined with matchless force, unflinching courage, unconquerable purpose. He was at once the strongest and the gentlest of men, the most masterful yet the most innocent.

Now "we associate weakness with innocence, and the association is so powerful that no human writer would undertake to sketch a great character on the basis of innocence, or would think it possible." *

Another remarkable feature of the character of Jesus is the absence in him of any consciousness of sin. It has been remarked that "human piety begins with repentance." But there is no sign or expression or hint of Jesus having ever repented, or even regretted any act or word or thought of his. All other good men have felt and confessed their shortcomings, their failures, their sins; and as they have become better and holier they have had a deeper sense of their sinfulness. But Jesus, though his words and acts and very presence are like a pure perfume of holiness, never for one moment feels or confesses any sense of sin or imperfection. Nay, he claims to be *sinless*. "Which of you convinceth me of sin?" was his challenge uttered eighteen centuries ago, and never successfully met. Here is a feature of character not only unexampled, but abso-

* Bushnell, "Nature and the Supernatural," p. 283.

lutely different from the fundamental experience of mankind—*so* different that it forbids us to classify Jesus with men, notwithstanding the beauty and perfection of his manhood. "Piety without one dash of repentance, one ingenuous confession of wrong, one tear, one look of contrition, one request to Heaven for pardon—let any one of mankind try this kind of piety, and see how long it will be ere his righteousness will prove itself to be the most impudent conceit." "Now he was either sinless, or he was not. If sinless, what greater, more palpable exception to the law of human development than that a perfect and stainless being has for once lived in the flesh? If not, . . . then we have a man taking up a religion without repentance . . . and holding it as a figment of insufferable presumption to the end of his life, and that in a way of such unfaltering grace and beauty as to command the universal homage of the human race! Could there be a wider deviation from all we know of mere human development?" *

Yet another unique feature in the character of Jesus was his perfect humility, conjoined with his amazing pretensions. Let me recall one or two of his utterances: "I am the light of the world;" "I am the resurrection and the life;" "I and the Father are one;" "All men should honor [me] the

* *Idem*, p. 286.

Son, even as they honor the Father;" "Father, glorify thou me with the glory which I had with thee before the world was;" "Before Abraham was, I am;" "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth;" "Come unto me, all ye that travail and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

There has never been any human being, unless he were a madman, who at all approached such self-assertion, such astonishing pretensions as these. Had such claims been heard from Plato, or Aristotle, or Socrates, or from any hero or benefactor of the race whomsoever, they would have been laughed to scorn. Yet Jesus has made them, and retains (even among unbelievers) the respect and the admiration of men. And though he has made these transcendent claims, which would imply unequaled arrogance in any other man, yet he retains among men to-day the place he has held for eighteen centuries as the meekest, the most modest, the lowliest of men! "His worth is seen to be so great, his authority so high, his spirit so celestial, that instead of being offended by his pretensions we take the impression of one in whom it is even a condescension to breathe our air. I say not only his friends and followers take this impression; it is received as naturally and irresistibly by unbelievers." * Here is indeed "an argument for his superhumanity that cannot be resisted."

* Bushnell.

But I must bring this lecture to a close. I must fain be content with having given these little glimpses of the great argument for the superhuman nature of Jesus which lies hid in the study of his character.* Enough is admitted by the ablest and most learned critics among unbelievers as to the historical character of the Gospels to give us a sure basis upon which to build our conception of what his character really was. And even if this were not

* Horace Bushnell writes as follows: "This one perfect character has come into our world, and lived in it, filling all the molds of action, all the terms of duty and love, with his own divine manners, works, and charities. . . . The world itself is changed, and is no more the same that it was; it has never been the same since Jesus left it. The air is charged with heavenly odors, and a kind of celestial consciousness, a sense of other worlds, is wafted on us in its breath. Let the dark ages come, let society roll backward, and churches perish in whole regions in the earth, . . . still there is a something here that was not, and a something that has immortality in it. . . . It were easier to untwist all the beams of light in the sky, separating and expunging one of the colors, than to get the character of Jesus, which is the real gospel, out of the world. Look ye hither, meantime, all ye blinded and fallen of mankind; a better nature is among you, a pure heart, out of some pure world, is come into your prison, and walks it with you. Do you require us to show who he is, and definitely to expound his person? We may not be able. Enough to know that he is not of us—some strange Being out of nature and above it, whose name is *Wonderful*. Enough that sin has never touched his hallowed nature, and that he is a friend. In him dawns a hope—purity has not come into our world except to purify. Behold the Lamb of God! Light breaks in; peace settles on the air; lo! the prison walls are giving way; rise, let us go!"—"Nature and the Supernatural," p. 332.

the case, the existence of four such portraitures of Jesus, so harmonious yet so independent, is explicable only on the supposition of the historical reality of the portraiture. And the character here portrayed is plainly that of a superhuman Person.

IV.

THE PLAN AND THE TEACHING OF CHRIST.

"Is this great idea, then, which no man ever before conceived, the raising of the whole human race to God, a plan sustained with such evenness of courage and a confidence of the world's future so far transcending any human example—this a human development? Regard the benevolence of it, the universality of it, the religious grandeur of it, as a work readjusting the relations of God and his government with men; the cost, the length of time it will cover, and the far-off date of its completion—is it on this scale that a Nazarene carpenter, a poor, uneducated villager, lays out his plans and graduates the confidence of his undertakings? . . . No human creature sits quietly down to a perpetual project, one that proposes to be executed only at the end, or final harvest of the world. That is not human, but divine."—HORACE BUSHNELL.

"I confess when I can escape the deadening power of habit, and can receive the full import of such passages as the following: 'Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest;' 'I am come to seek and to save that which was lost;' 'He that confesseth me before men, him will I confess before my Father in heaven;' . . . I say, when I can succeed in realizing the import of such passages, I feel myself listening to a being such as never before and never since spoke in human language. I am awed by the consciousness of greatness which these simple words express; and when I connect this greatness with the proof of Christ's miracles, I am compelled to speak with the Centurion: 'Truly this was the Son of God!'"—CHANNING.

IV.

THE PLAN AND THE TEACHING OF CHRIST.

"Never man spake like this man."—JOHN vii. 46.

IN continuing the discussion of the evidences of Christianity in relation to modern unbelief, I reminded you that the battle of the faith in our day turns upon the nature of Christ's person, and called your attention to the *order* of the argument whereby we maintain that he was the Son of God and the Saviour of the world. We do not prove the divinity of his person by the miracles which he wrought, but we rather prove his miracles by his divinity. I then indicated the substance of our argument for his divine mission, viz.: The character of Jesus is superhuman; the teaching of Jesus is superhuman; the work of Jesus in history and in the human soul is superhuman. Therefore he is himself superhuman.

I then undertook—and this constituted the body of my lecture—to develop the first branch of this argument, that, namely, which relates to the character of Christ; and it was my aim to show that it is so unique in its moral grandeur that it evidently belongs to a different category from all other human

characters, so that Jesus Christ cannot be classified with men. Here, indeed, we are confronted by a paradox: he is evidently human, the truest of men, the finest type of the race, the man of men, the mirror of all that is best and noblest and most heroic in man, and yet as evidently is he more than man. The more we study his character, the more overwhelming grows the conviction that there is in him a nature and powers far above the plane of possible human attainment.

This evening I take up another branch of the argument—that which relates to the *teaching* of Jesus. And I argue that it is so far above and apart from all other human teaching, so fundamentally distinct from and superior to all other, that it is evidently superhuman, transcending all possible human insight and foresight. "*Never man spake like this man.*"

1. Now the first feature of the teaching of Jesus which I allege in proof of this claim is the purpose he avows and the plan he proposes as the end and aim of his mission. This I affirm to be not only completely unique and original, but so stupendous, so sublime, as plainly to transcend the bounds of merely human conception.

Observe what the purpose avowed by Jesus Christ was: to establish a world-wide kingdom on this earth in the minds and hearts of mankind. Alex-

ander undertook to subdue all earthly kingdoms in his own generation; Jesus Christ undertook to bring under *his* scepter not only all the peoples and kingdoms of *one* generation, but of *all* generations, present and to come. Paul so understood his purpose: "He must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet." He is "above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come." "King of kings and Lord of lords" is the title he calmly assumes. He foresees his death, but this will be no check to his power or to the progress of his kingdom. This carpenter of Nazareth, without any appearance of presumption, speaks and plans and acts as one superior to death (though he knows he is soon to die), as one to whom the ages belong, and whose work will go on from age to age—ay, unto the ages of the ages—and go on under his guidance, under his governing hand. He is a man—oh, never was such intense and sensitive humanity as his!—and yet, unlike all his predecessors and all who succeeded him (to use Mr. Mill's phrase), he seems independent of time and death and change; he is the King of the ages; eternity is his sphere of action. It is not merely that he founds a kingdom which he believes will endure; but that in spite of death he will still be the King of this kingdom, the living Ruler of his

Church through all time. It is not that he propounds a philosophy which he believes will win its way to the assent ultimately of all mankind; but that he establishes a society which will grow as the seed grows, which will work as leaven works, and that he will be the ever-present Head of that society through all the cycling centuries.

Is it thus that *men* lay their plans? Did any *other* man ever dream of such an undertaking? If any living man should hold such language to-day, would he be listened to? Would he not be laughed to scorn? Or would he not be pitied as a madman? Yet Jesus Christ was listened to. Men heard him, followed him, obeyed him, gave up all for him. More wonderful still, myriads who never saw him or heard his voice have died for him.

This is what so impressed the Emperor Napoleon. He said in his conversations at St. Helena: "Alexander, Cæsar, Charlemagne, I myself, have founded great empires; but upon what did these creations of our genius depend? Upon force. Jesus alone founded his empire upon love, and to this very day millions would die for him. . . . I think I understand something of human nature, and I tell you all these were men, and I am a man. None else is like him: Jesus Christ was more than man. . . . Christ alone has succeeded in so raising the mind of man towards the unseen that it becomes insensible to the

barriers of time and space. Across a chasm of eighteen hundred years Jesus Christ makes a demand which is beyond all others difficult to satisfy. . . . He asks for the human heart; he will have it entirely to himself; he demands it unconditionally; and forthwith his demand is granted. Wonderful! In defiance of time and space the soul of man with all its powers and faculties becomes an annexation to the empire of Christ. . . . This phenomenon is unaccountable; it is altogether beyond the scope of man's creative powers. Time, the great destroyer, is powerless to extinguish this sacred flame; time can neither exhaust its strength nor put a limit to its range. . . . This it is which proves to me quite convincingly the divinity of Jesus Christ." *

Yes, the plan of Jesus Christ was so vast in its scope, so sublime in its aim—being nothing less than the moral and spiritual regeneration of the whole human race—that it is not only absolutely unparalleled, but plainly completely beyond the range of mere human conception. It soars into a region that the mind of man never before aspired to reach. Even Channing says: "The idea of changing the moral aspect of the whole earth, of recovering all nations to the pure and inward worship of the one God, and to a spirit of divine and fraternal love, was one of which we meet not a trace in philosopher

* Quoted by Liddon, "Bampton Lectures," p. 148.

or legislator before him. The human mind had given no promise of this extent of view."*

Let us note also, as one of the absolutely unique peculiarities of the plan avowed by Jesus, its relation to his own person. He was not only the Founder of his kingdom, but its King, its Head; the living center and heart of its being. Now try for a moment to realize what it meant for a *man* (and a *poor* man, without place or power) to say, "I am the light of the world," "the light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world;" or to say, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away;" or, "Whoso confesseth me before men, him will I confess before my Father;" or, "I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me;" or, "The Son of Man is come to give his life a ransom for many." This young Galilean peasant dares to put himself forward as the Saviour of the whole world, and makes his own sufferings and death a necessary part of his plan for the salvation of the world. He declares that his cross would become the magnet to draw all men unto him. He affirms that his blood was to be shed for the remission of sins, and that no man could come to the eternal Father but by him. He bids all the weary children of care and sorrow come unto him and he would give them rest. He boldly assumes power to

* Works, vol. ii., p. 57.

forgive sins, and even when he is nailed to the shameful cross and suffering the agonies of a fearful death he claims power to open the gates of Paradise to the dying thief by his side. When he is leaving the earth he encourages his disciples by the extraordinary promise of his perpetual presence: "*Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.*" And as he puts himself forward as the Saviour of the world, so also he advances the equally astounding claim to be the final Judge of quick and dead. Yes, the judgment and the final destiny of every individual soul of all the multitudinous generations of men, and of all races and peoples and tribes of mankind, is to be in the hands of this man Jesus of Nazareth. What, then, is he? Who is he? Whence came he? Is he a madman, or is he indeed the Christ, the Son of the living God? That is the inevitable dilemma.

2. But let us consider the teaching of Jesus in some other aspects which equally exhibit its superhuman character. Here let me interpose an explanation. We refer to the New Testament as our authority for what his teaching really was. And we do so without assuming its inspiration or its authority. For whatever we think of these books, here they are. And even if it were not true (as it is) that no competent or intelligent scholar would deny that they contain the historical reflection of

the teaching of Jesus, we should still be confronted by the extraordinary phenomenon of the sublime practical and ethical teaching which they contain, incomparably more exalted and majestic than can be found in the writings of any philosopher or sage of antiquity. And the problem would remain, Who could be the author of teaching so sublime? It is easier to believe that Jesus taught thus than that any of his followers invented such discourses or such precepts.

To return, then. Here we are face to face with the unique and wonderful utterances of Jesus Christ. Open your New Testament and read the Sermon on the Mount, for example, and then tell me where you will find another such discourse among all the literatures of the world. What sage or philosopher ever taught as this uneducated young artisan out of an obscure Jewish village? We have read our Cicero, our Plato, our Seneca, our Marcus Aurelius; we have read translations from many of the much-vaunted sacred books of the East; but none of them all can bear any comparison with the simplicity, the majesty, the moral breadth, the depth of insight, the sublimity of tone, which breathe through the pages of the New Testament. It has been well said by an author of the last century: "If any one can doubt of the superior excellence of this religion above all which preceded it, let him but peruse with attention

those unparalleled writings in which it is transmitted to the present times, and compare them with the most celebrated productions of the pagan world; and if he is not sensible of their superior beauty, simplicity, and originality, I will venture to pronounce that he is as deficient in taste as in faith, and that he is as bad a critic as a Christian." *

But there is much more than this. There is about the discourses of Christ an indescribable tone and perfume of another world. The voice that speaks here carries with it an authority such as is felt in no other teacher or philosopher who ever taught or wrote. It somehow commands us, and holds us, and impresses us, as none other. He does not argue with us; he simply announces his precepts or makes his demands as one having authority. And our consciences yield obeisance to the kingly scepter which he wields in these matchless discourses and parables and precepts. "The spirit of man is the candle of the Lord," says the wise man of old. Yes, and this spirit of man responds to the teaching of Jesus; recognizes its truth, its authority. I speak now of *moral* truth, and I affirm that we *can* and *do* perceive the validity and the obligation of a moral principle or precept when stated. It appeals to us. It finds us. It arrests us, and we cannot challenge its authority. Now the moral

* Soame Jenyns.

teaching of Jesus has just this quality. It requires no credentials. It is its own witness. It bears stamped upon it the image and superscription of the King. It is coin of the realm and kingdom of the truth, and every son of truth acknowledges its genuineness and its value. "He that is of God heareth my words." Even Goethe confessed that there was in the four Gospels "the reflection of a greatness which emanated from the person of Jesus, and which was as divine . . . as was ever seen upon earth. . . . I bow before him as the divine manifestation of the highest principle of morality." And Theodore Parker said of him: "He unites in himself the sublimest precepts and divinest practices, thus more than realizing the dream of prophets and sages. . . . He pours out a doctrine beautiful as the light, sublime as heaven, and true as God."

I have not time in the limits of this lecture to enter upon an analysis of Christ's teaching. Such an analysis would show, among other things, its characteristic and fundamental difference from all other ethical systems, its unexampled catholicity, its spotless purity, its freedom from any admixture of puerility, or weakness, or local prejudice, or national narrowness, or superstition. It would show how it discredits many of the most boasted virtues of the age in which it appeared, and exalts from the mire of contempt to the throne of glory such qualities as

meekness, humility, purity. It would point out how Jesus made *love* the basis and root of his entire system of ethics and of social law.

But it is unnecessary that I should enter into an extended consideration of the moral teaching of the New Testament, inasmuch as its sublimity and superiority are recognized by almost all competent critics, including Ernest Renan and John Stuart Mill.

But I press the question, What account are we to give of such teaching? Is it thus that *men* have taught? Is it a phenomenon that takes its place in the course of natural development? Is it according to the law of human development that a young, uneducated Galilean youth, born of the narrowest and most exclusive race in the world, and brought up in a society the most unenlightened, in an age the most corrupt, should suddenly rise to the sublimest height of moral truth, as far outshining all other great teachers as the sun is brighter than the smallest star, and that he should reign supreme in the firmament for eighteen centuries by the pure brightness and effulgence of his own teaching and example—is this, I say, a natural phenomenon? or is it not rather an event altogether unprecedented, altogether apart from natural development, plainly supernatural? In the words of Horace Bushnell, "What human teacher ever came down thus upon the soul of the

race, as a beam of light from the skies, pure light, shining directly into the visual orb of the mind, a light for all that live, a full transparent day, in which truth bathes the spirit as an element? . . . Is this human, or is it plainly divine?"

3. Once more. Consider more fully the astounding claims put forth by Jesus of Nazareth, already alluded to. Recall his absolutely unparalleled self-assertion. He affirms his preëxistence—"Before Abraham was I am." He associates himself with the eternal glory of the heavenly Father in past eternity—"Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was." He claims coequal honor with the Almighty—"All men should honor the Son even as they honor the Father;" coequal knowledge—"No man knoweth the Son but the Father, neither knoweth any man the Father save the Son;"* coequal power—"All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth." He speaks with an authority as absolute as that which promulgated the moral law on Sinai—"It was said to them of old time, but *I* say unto you." All other prophets and teachers sent from God used in their loftiest utterances the formula, "Thus saith the Lord;" but this

* Matt. xi. 27. Observe the Johannean tone of the language here. St. John is *fuller* than the other evangelists in the assertion of our Lord's divinity, but not *stronger*.

man says, "Verily, verily, *I* say unto you," "thus implicitly placing himself on a line of equality, not with Moses, not with Abraham, but with the Lord God himself!" And what was the most prominent subject of his teaching? Was it justice, or benevolence, or meekness, or purity, or patience, or charity? No: his chief subject was himself. He preached *himself;* and when he sent out his apostles it was that they should preach *Christ.* Hear his words: "I am the way, the truth, and the life;" "I am the bread of life;" "I am the good shepherd;" "I am the door;" "I am the true vine;" "I am the resurrection and the life;" "Without me ye can do nothing;" "He that abideth in me and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit;" "No man cometh unto the Father but by me;" "Believe in God, believe also in me;" "He that believeth on me hath eternal life."

Take note also of his imperious claim to the souls of men, to rule them with unchallenged and absolute authority, to enter into and take possession of the deepest sanctities of their being, to stand first in their affections, even before father or mother, husband, wife, or child! Could there be a more absolute claim to equality with God than this? But he makes the claim unequivocally and in terms. When the Jews charged him with making himself God though he was but a man, he did not deny it.

When he stood on trial before Caiaphas, he was charged with blasphemy in making himself the Son of God. Did he repudiate with horror and indignation such a charge, as he should have done if it were not true? Nay, he was silent, and allowed himself to be condemned to death upon that charge and that only. Again, before Pilate's tribunal, he was charged with the same horrible sin: "He ought to die," they cried, "because he made himself the Son of God." Did he here deny the charge? Nay, he owned the truth of the *fact* on which they based the charge—"Thou sayest it," he answered when the Roman judge demanded, "Art thou the Son of God?"

Now two things are here worthy of careful consideration. The first is that these amazing claims of Jesus so interpenetrate all the Gospels, and all parts of the Gospels, his discourses as well as the narration of his acts, that there is no possible alternative between accepting them as authentic in substance, and rejecting the whole narrative as legendary. The fact that he made these claims is not dependent upon the genuineness and authenticity of any particular passage or passages. It would still remain though one should accept the now discredited theory of some of the destructive critics and reject entirely the Gospel of St. John. It would not be invalidated though all the alleged

legendary elements of the synoptic Gospels were cut out of the record. In fact, this peculiarity of the person and the words of Jesus is inseparable from any possible view of him as an historical personage, as much so as oxygen is from the air we breathe.

The other notable fact which should be considered in this connection is that notwithstanding this self-assertion, which in any other great teacher would excite contempt, or ridicule, or indignation, he still occupies the highest place in the esteem and admiration of mankind, even when these his claims are not acknowledged, and still stands out as the peerless model of meekness and humility. Channing declares that the charge of an extravagant, self-deluding enthusiasm is the last to be fastened on Jesus. And yet if these claims of his to divine honor and power and worship be not just, how can he be vindicated from the charge of blasphemous presumption or self-deluding enthusiasm?

The dilemma is inevitable: either he is what he professed to be, the Christ, the Son of God, or else he is a man who can no longer be followed as an exemplar or trusted as a teacher. But let any inquirer consider that dilemma in the light of his unparalleled moral teaching and his peerless life and character and *then* say which is the more reasonable conclusion: that *such* a man, *such* a teacher,

such a sublime and royal personage, was after all a mad dreamer; or that his claims were founded on truth, that he was all he declared himself to be, that we are here in the presence of a superhuman character, a superhuman life, and superhuman wisdom, and that this man of Nazareth is indeed the Christ, the Son of the living God.

V.

THE WORK OF CHRIST AMONG MEN AND IN MAN.

"WHERE shall we find in such beauty as we find it in Jesus that mirroring purity of soul which the fury of the storm may agitate but cannot cloud? Where has there been so grand an idea, so restless an activity, so exalted a sacrifice for it as in Jesus? Who has been the founder of a work which has endowed with as rich treasures, in as high a degree, the masses of men and nations through the long ages, as the work which bears the name of Christ? As little as mankind can be without religion, so little can they be without Christ!"—STRAUSS (A.D. 1839).

"Il a fallu une effusion de l'amour divin pour sauver l'humanité. Le sentiment de la charité manquait au monde ancien; de là l'esprit de division, la guerre des classes, l'esclavage et la décadence. Il fallait unir de nouveau les hommes, les pénétrer des idées de fraternité et d'égalité que la philosophie avaient aperçue, mais qui étaient restées stériles dans ses mains. C'est la charité qui produisit cette révolution, le plus étonnant des miracles opérés par Jésus Christ."—LAURENT.

"The holiest among the mighty, and the mightiest among the holy, [He] has lifted with his pierced hand empires off their hinges, has turned the stream of centuries out of its channel, and still governs the ages."—JEAN PAUL RICHTER.

"By heaven, I long to see a Stoic! But you have not one fully developed? Show me then one who is developing; one who is approaching toward this character. Do me this favor! Do not refuse an old man a sight which he has never yet seen."—EPICTETUS.

V.

THE WORK OF CHRIST AMONG MEN AND IN MAN.

"Believe me for the very works' sake."—JOHN xiv. 11.

IN unfolding the outlines of the argument which the Christian apologist opposes to the negations of modern unbelief, I have dwelt upon the character of Jesus and the plan and the teaching of Jesus as giving a sure basis for the conclusion that he was a superhuman being—one who cannot, in spite of the perfection and beauty of his manhood, be classified with men. You have been asked to consider the extraordinary phenomenon presented by the character of Jesus, which is not only unique in its moral perfection (on a plane far above any other human being), but also unique in that it presents the one solitary example of a sinless man—of a man who has no consciousness of sin, and against whom no charge of sin can be substantiated, or even with decency suggested, while at the same time he is the universally accepted model of modesty and humility. Such a man, I have urged, was plainly superhuman; human nature, as we know it, as the experience of all the ages of history reveals it, could not produce

of itself and without supernatural aid such a character.

In my last lecture I carried the argument a step further, and asked you to consider the plan and the teaching of Jesus, pointing out that it was not only unspeakably more sublime than that of any other sage or philosopher, but also fundamentally and specifically different, transcending all possible human insight and foresight. The plan which he proposed was so astounding in its reach and in its scope as plainly to have been impossible to any merely human conception. And his moral teaching was so incomparably sublime in its purity and its perfection, and so catholic in its adaptation to mankind, that it cannot be accounted for by the law of human development, but must be looked upon as derived from some source more than human. In fact, the doctrines of Christ were as inconceivable to the wisest of mankind "as the Newtonian system is at this day to the most ignorant tribes of savages"; they were doctrines "which human reason could never have discovered"; and yet "when discovered they coincide with and are confirmed by it."

I now enter upon another branch of the great argument. I ask you to take with me a survey of what Jesus Christ has wrought in history, and to consider whether his work, any more than his character or his words, can be catalogued with things

that are merely human. It must needs be a very fragmentary and incomplete presentation of such a theme that can be given in my limits here. Adequately to portray it, one would need the power to show you all the kingdoms of the world, and all the ages of Christian history, with its conflicts and its progress, in one short half-hour. But though I shall only be able to give a feeble outline of what the Nazarene has wrought for this sad and sin-stricken earth by the mysterious power of his cross and passion, I believe it will be enough for my purpose; enough to convince you (if indeed any of you are unconvinced) that a force has been working in Christianity which is greater than human, and to draw from your lips the confession which I have already quoted from the Emperor Napoleon, "*Jesus Christ was more than man.*"

1. First of all, then, in illustration of the superhuman action of Jesus Christ in history, consider the triumphant progress of Christianity in the first centuries of our era. It is certain that about A.D. 30 there was no such thing as the Christian Church, nor any men or women calling themselves Christians. It is also certain that by the year 64 the Christian religion was widely spread in the Roman Empire. To this fact we have the testimony of the Roman historian Tacitus and of the Roman governor Pliny. We have also the undisputed testimony af-

forded by the first four Epistles of St. Paul, which show that the Christian Church was already established and had numerous adherents in Rome, in Corinth, and in the province of Galatia. Here, then, in the single generation between A.D. 30 and A.D. 64 the Christian religion had taken its rise, and sprung at a bound into wide acceptance. All three of these documents testify to this. All three likewise testify to the power it exerted over the minds of men: Tacitus, by exhibiting the Christians as "hated by the whole human race," yet maintaining their "pernicious superstition" in the face of persecution and death; Pliny, by declaring that such was its success that "the temples of the gods stood deserted, and sacrifices had for a long time ceased to be offered," while the Christians met together in secret places before dawn to sing praises to Christ as God, and to make solemn engagements one with another not to commit any crime or wickedness; and Paul, by giving, in those remarkable and unparalleled letters to the Romans, to the Corinthians, and to the Galatians, such an inside picture of the faith and the life and the moral principles of the earliest Christians as proves to every candid mind the extraordinary power Jesus of Nazareth wielded over the minds, over the hearts, over the lives of his disciples. Study those four undisputed Epistles of Paul. I affirm that they contain conclusive evidence that Jesus of

Nazareth, though long since crucified by Pontius Pilate, was wielding over men (and among them was certainly one man of remarkable genius and force of character, Paul himself) a power which has no parallel in history, a power which must have been superhuman. Hear him affirming that Christ's gospel was the power of God unto salvation; that the cross of Christ was his glory; that Christ had redeemed him; that the love of Christ constrained him; that he was not his own, but Christ's; that so inspiring and so satisfying was the love of Christ to him that even in tribulation and distress and persecution and famine, and in the face of the sword itself, he was more than conqueror. All this is rendered the more impressive and significant by the fact which he himself declares (and remember, his honesty is impugned by none), viz., that he had been a zealous persecutor of the religion of this Jesus whom he now adored. Now here is an example which of itself is sufficient to establish the claim that Jesus has wrought among men with superhuman power. The whole argument might be rested right here. We need no other witness to establish the truth and the more than human power of the Christian religion than we find in these undisputed Epistles of Paul.

But I ask you to take a wider view. Follow the history of this hated sect of the Nazarenes for two

or three centuries, and behold how it triumphs over the religions, over the philosophies, over the superstitions, over the prejudices of mankind! See how it wins its way from town to town, from shore to shore, till it becomes the prevailing religion in the Roman Empire! See how it changes the customs, and the laws, and the jurisprudence of the world! See how at length the proud eagles, before whose conquering might every kingdom of the earth has succumbed, at length bow before the mightier might of the cross of Christ! And yet what would have seemed more preposterous to any cultivated Roman citizen of the age of Tiberius or Nero than the predicted triumph of Christianity! With what fine scorn would not Tacitus have treated the suggestion that this "pernicious superstition" was destined to prevail over the whole extent of the empire within two hundred years! "Everything," it has been said, "seemed to conspire to render its victory utterly impossible. Its origin was against it, it seemed but a Jewish sect. Its advocates and followers had nothing attractive about them, and belonged for the most part to the lower and uneducated classes. Its doctrine was a 'stumbling-block'; it appeared a most vexatious foolishness. Its reverence for God, too, was suspected, for the Christians, using no images of the gods, were taken for atheists. The worst and most immoral things were said of its

mysterious rites. Public opinion was prejudiced against them; philosophers assailed Christianity with intellectual weapons, while the authorities opposed it with brutal violence."* That was indeed a formidable, it seemed an invincible, confederacy which Christianity found arrayed against it when it entered upon its sublimely audacious task of subduing the world to Christ. The prejudices and superstitions of the lower classes; the prestige and the antiquity of the existing polytheism; the keen intellects of the philosophers; the culture and the refinement of the wealthy; and the might of the mailed hand of imperial Rome herself—all these were leagued against this despised and hated sect of Christians. And yet it triumphed—triumphed in the face of persecutions too dreadful to be described. "No age, no sex was spared. All the strength of the empire was put in requisition; certain of the most energetic of the emperors, such as Decius and Diocletian, considered it their special duty to root out Christianity from the world, because the very existence of the Roman Empire depended on its extirpation. But the arm of the executioner failed before the fidelity of the Christians."†

And by what means, by what arms, did it triumph? By abjuring every appeal to the passions or lusts or desires or ambitions of men! By demanding that

* Luthardt, "Fundamental Truths," p. 270. † *Idem.*

they renounce the honors and glories and emoluments of the world and embrace (under the then conditions of the case) losses, imprisonments, degradation, death! By holding out as the reward of faithful service "tribulation" in this world, immortality in the world to come! "Let a man deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me," were the words of Jesus. Thus, as Pascal has said, Jesus chose means "adapted for defeat," while Mohammed, preaching a religion of conquest and of sensuous enjoyments, "chose means adapted for conquest." No doubt Christianity did hold out rewards even in this world which acted as powerful motives; that is to say, the joy of a virtuous life, the blessedness of peace with God, the sweetness of pardon, and the comfort of a reasonable, religious, and holy hope. But I ask, Whence did Jesus of Nazareth receive the power thus to rouse the better nature of men to the point of preferring spiritual to material joys? How was he able to surround the bitter cross with such a halo of peace that men were ready to take it up and bear it patiently? Mr. Gibbon, indeed, in his famous fifteenth chapter enumerates among the five causes for the success of Christianity the hope which it held out of immortality. But I ask, How was this uneducated Jewish carpenter able to impart to the minds of men the firm conviction of immortality, which Gibbon confesses the greatest intellects of

Greece and Rome had so far failed in doing that "it was looked upon as an idle and extravagant opinion," "rejected with contempt by every man of a liberal education"?* I will answer in the skeptical historian's own words, which seem almost to have been divinely overruled that he should, like Caiaphas, bear unwitting testimony to Christ's superhuman power: "Since, therefore, the most sublime efforts of philosophy can extend no further than feebly to point out the desire, the hope, or at most the probability, of a future state, there is nothing except a divine revelation that can ascertain the existence and describe the condition of the invisible country which is destined to receive the souls of men after their separation from the body." †

Yes, verily, this witness, though he takes the stand for Antichrist, gives testimony which sustains our contention that Jesus Christ is declared by what he has wrought to be the Son of God, with power, since he has done what the sublimest efforts of philosophy failed to do: he has given men assured and joyous conviction of immortality—and this "nothing except a divine revelation" could do.

With confidence, then, the Christian apologist appeals to history, for its pages contain the indelible record of the superhuman action of Jesus Christ

* "Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire," vol. ii., p. 78.

† *Idem*, p. 79.

among men. The triumph of Christianity in those first centuries is a phenomenon that refuses to take its place in any process of natural evolution, because no natural causes are adequate for its explanation. He must indeed be the victim of credulity who can suppose such events to have taken place, under such conditions, without any supernatural cause.

With admirable force has it been urged that to suppose that "these few inconsiderable persons" (the first evangelists) "should have been able, in the course of a few years, to have spread this their religion over most parts of the then known world in opposition to the interests, pleasures, ambition, prejudices, and even reason of mankind; to have triumphed over the power of princes, the intrigues of states, the force of custom, the blindness of zeal, the influence of priests, the arguments of orators, and the philosophy of the world, without any supernatural assistance—if any one can believe these miraculous events, contradictory to the powers and dispositions of human nature, he must be possessed of much more faith than is necessary to make him a Christian, and remain an unbeliever from mere credulity." *

2. But I pass to another aspect of the superhuman action of Jesus Christ—the social and moral reforms

* Soame Jenyns, "Internal Evidence of the Christian Religion," p. 51.

which his religion has wrought among men. Here I am indeed embarrassed by the fruitfulness of my theme, and the narrowness of my limits for its discussion. To do it even scant justice it would be necessary to photograph by the aid of the best historians the state of morals, the condition of society, the pulse of the people in the Roman world when Jesus of Nazareth first entered into it as a redeeming power. And then, having shown the degradation of the masses, the pollution of the moral fountains of society, the darkness which overhung the horizon of the world, both for time and for eternity, to show how the coming of the Son of Man changed the whole aspect and atmosphere of things; how the light that shone from his divine face irradiated the darkness with bright beams of hope for the poor, for the oppressed, for the slave; how his divine voice brought deliverance to the captive, and the opening of the prison door to them that were bound. But I cannot stay to *prove* it. I can only assert it, and leave it to your own reading to confirm the truth of what I say.

Christianity broke down the walls of national jealousy and hatred and proclaimed the brotherhood of men, and so introduced a leaven of loving-kindness which slowly permeated and steadily transformed society. It asserted for every man his sonship in the family of God, and so laid the

foundation of personal liberty and individual rights. It threw its ægis around the poor and the weak and the prisoner, and claimed for them sympathy and justice and charity. It first unspeakably ameliorated the condition of the slave, affirming that he was not a chattel, but a brother in the family of God, and so sowed the seed which led to the ultimate abolition of slavery. It struck the fetters from the limbs of woman, and restored her to her rightful place as the helpmeet and companion and peer of man. It took from the father the power of life and death over his children, and made the paternal relation holy and beautiful. It gave to marriage a sanctity which it was sacrilege to violate, and elevated love from the depths of sensuality to the throne of purity. It seized and strangled those unnatural vices which Plato in deep sorrow saw eating out the vigor and manhood of Greece but despaired of ever eradicating. It abolished the cruel and bloody games of the gladiatorial arena. It at length drove from the stage the licentious shows which so deeply depraved the morals of the people. It rooted out the prevalent crime of infanticide—that revolting and inhuman practice which, more than almost anything else, revealed the corruption of the human heart under the blight of paganism. It developed the humane instincts of men, and created the hospital

and the orphan asylum, and a host of kindred institutions of charity. It reformed the principles of legislation, and laid the foundations of the new science of international law.

What shall I more say in this fleeting moment to declare what Jesus Christ has wrought for man? What one thing shall I adduce as the supremest manifestation of his beneficent power among men? Ah! *he created the Christian Church*, which, with all its imperfections, with all its frequent apostasies from the spirit and the principles of its Master and Head, is nevertheless the divinest and the holiest and the most beneficent institution that ever existed on this earth. Even Ernest Renan exclaims: "Let us bow before the supreme miracle of this great Church, the inexhaustible mother of unceasingly varied manifestations." *

And now, my brethren, what account are we to give of these phenomena thus rapidly surveyed? Are they natural phenomena? Do the principles and powers which history and experience make us familiar with as those which belong to man even in his highest developments of genius and his noblest achievements of moral power, suffice to explain the facts before us? Surely not. Neither does history give any parallel, ancient or modern, to these achieve-

* "Marcus Aurelius," p. 369.

ments of Jesus Christ, nor any promise or germ of the development of any such power. The Christian history, like the character and the words of Christ, is unique. It stands alone, without a peer or a rival. And the only reasonable conclusion is that a power was at work in it which was more than human; in other words, that Jesus of Nazareth was what he claimed to be, and what the Christian Church from the beginning believed him to be, the Son of God.

3. My subject has yet another aspect, more important, perhaps, than either of those yet presented: Christ's power over individual souls; his power of personal renovation of character; his power to transform men from slaves of lust and self to servants and sons of God. Paganism, in the persons of its noblest philosophers, its greatest seers, lamented its inability to give power to tread the path of virtue which it pointed out and recommended. Ovid's lament tells the universal story of failure: "*Video meliora, proboque; deteriora sequor!*" To see the right, and to approve it—this the philosopher could do; but ah, to *do* the right—that was the difficulty! Whence to gain the *power* and the *will* to do it? Age to age repeated the question, but no answer came till Jesus of Nazareth proclaimed himself the Redeemer as well as the Light of the world. The Stoic philosophy was the noblest attempt of the

mind of man to lift the world up to a lofty moral ideal. But it failed; and it felt its failure bitterly. Epictetus, the grandest of them all, cries out in despair: "Show me a true Stoic—one who really exemplifies the principles of the school—for I have never seen one." It could not bestow the power to tread the path of duty which it urged men to follow.

But precisely this is what Jesus Christ, and he alone, has been able to do. I will adduce in confirmation of this statement, not the opinions of Christians, but of eminent antagonists of the Christian religion.

"There have been professors of virtue," says Renan, "more austere, perhaps firmer, but there never have been like masters in the science of goodness. The joy of the soul is the grand Christian art." *

"What needs admitting, or rather proclaiming, by agnostics who would be just," says Cotter Morrison, one of the ablest of them all, "is that the Christian doctrine has a power of cultivating and developing saintliness which has had no equal in any other creed or philosophy."

"It strengthens the will, raises and purifies the affections, and finally achieves a conquest over the baser self in man." †

Yes, "their rock is not as our Rock, our enemies

* "Marcus Aurelius," p. 371.

† "The Service of Man," p. 197.

themselves being judges." And what is the explanation of this unique moral power that resides in Christianity? For answer let me recall the utterance of Mr. Lecky in a passage already quoted (p. 57), wherein he declares that Jesus Christ "has exerted so deep an influence that it may be truly said that the simple record of three short years of active life has done more to regenerate and soften mankind than all the disquisitions of philosophers and than all the exhortations of moralists."

Here I rest my argument. What further confirmation do we need of the more than human power that dwelt in Jesus of Nazareth? This philosophical historian, calmly and dispassionately analyzing Christianity as a phenomenon which demands explanation, himself not a disciple of Jesus—nay, a skeptic—finds that "through all the changes of eighteen centuries" Christ has "filled the hearts of men with an impassioned love." I put it to your common sense: Is it within the range of merely human power thus to establish an empire of love in the hearts of fifty-four generations of men? and to do this after he is dead, and among men who have never seen his face or heard his voice? and to wield this marvelous power (as the historian assures us), not on men or women of a particular race or temperament, but among "all ages, nations, temperaments, and conditions"? I ask you to say whether

you can conceive of any merely human influence rising to such a height of power as to become, as the historian testifies Jesus Christ has become, "not only the highest pattern of virtue, but the highest incentive to its practice"? Let those who have largest experience of the powers and capacities of men say whether it is believable that the record of three short years of active life should have "done more to regenerate and soften mankind than all the disquisitions of philosophers and than all the exhortations of moralists," and yet that that life should have had nothing in it above the plane of these human lives of ours, and that record should not have carried with it a superhuman power. It is a conclusion which only a very credulous person could deliberately adopt. Reason rejects the hypothesis as absurd, because it contradicts one of her first principles, that every effect must have an adequate cause.

This majestic and marvelous effect, which we see in the victory of Christ over the Roman Empire, over its religion, its superstition, its philosophy, its physical might; in the elevating and ennobling influence of his kingdom over society and civilization; and in his conquest of the hearts of uncounted millions of men and his renovation of their lives—this, I say, is an effect so stupendous that enlightened reason must refuse to believe it could have proceeded from any

merely human source. The only adequate cause for Christ's work is a superhuman cause.*

* "The future is lighted for us with the radiant colors of hope. Strife and sorrow shall disappear. Peace and love shall reign supreme. The dream of poets, the lesson of priest and prophet, the inspiration of the great musician, is confirmed in the light of modern knowledge; and as we gird ourselves for the work of life we may look forward to the time when in the truest sense the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdom of Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever, King of kings and Lord of lords."—JOHN FISKE.

VI.

MIRACLES AND THE MODERN VIEW OF THE WORLD.

"THE natural and the spiritual miracles of the sacred narrative are only the notes of a higher harmony which resound throughout the discord of earthly history."—BEYSCHLAG.

"All that Hume has made out is that no evidence can prove a miracle to any one who did not previously believe the existence of a being or beings with supernatural power."—JOHN STUART MILL.

"Dieu, peut-il faire des miracles, c'est à dire, peut-il deroger aux lois qu'il a établies? Cette question sérieusement traitée serait impie, si elle n'était absurde."—ROUSSEAU.

"The scientific difficulty with regard to miracles will entirely disappear if any view of the universe be accepted which implies the presence in it of living beings much more powerful than ourselves."—STEWART and TAIT (in "The Unseen Universe.")

"A miracle is not unnatural, that is contrary to, and not only different from, the observed course of phenomena. . . . Let it once be seen that the law necessarily involves the idea of a power acting according to the law, and acting freely, . . . and there will be no more difficulty in feeling that the miraculous action of God is as truly natural—that is, in accordance with what we may expect from a consideration of the whole scheme of nature—as his ordinary action. . . . In other words, if miracles are unnatural then we are hopelessly inclosed within the barriers of material laws and absolutely shut off from all intercourse with the Infinite."—WESTCOTT.

VI.

MIRACLES AND THE MODERN VIEW OF THE WORLD.

"Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know."—Acts ii. 22.

Those who have followed the argument which I have hitherto traced in these lectures will remember that I have undertaken to give valid reasons for believing in the superhuman nature of Jesus, without assuming either the inspiration or authority of the New Testament, or the certainty of his having wrought the miracles there recorded. I have waived all the doctrines of the Christian religion, and made my appeal to facts that cannot be denied or disputed. I have pointed to the character of Christ, and I have challenged any man to give a rational account of it except on the ground of its reality and of its being a copy of a superhuman original. I have cited the teaching of Jesus, his stupendous plan and his unique and flawless ethical precepts—another fact as undeniable as the light—and I have asked if these be not plainly beyond the reach of any mere human sage. I have finally appealed to his action in history, in

society, in the church, and in the individual soul; and I have urged that here too is a fact that defies explanation upon any other ground than this—that it was and is the action of a superhuman Being. Thus we have a threefold cord to bind us to belief in the superhumanness of Christ: his character, his teaching, his acts. They are undeniable facts, and they are intelligible only on the supposition of the presence in them all of a superhuman personality.

There is only one way of evading the force of this argument, and that is by an *a priori* assumption that the superhuman is in itself incredible, and therefore, whatever may be the explanation of the marvelous facts to which I have appealed, we cannot accept the one suggested, because the superhuman, like the supernatural, is unbelievable.

Now the discussion of this assumption brings up the whole question of miracles, because, though we do not put forward Christ's miracles as the proof of his divine character, yet, after all, he himself, as a superhuman being, is a miracle; and if miracles are impossible or incredible, he is so also.

I propose, then, this evening to examine the objections made to miracles, and to show, first, that miracles are possible; secondly, that they are probable; thirdly, that they have actually occurred.

Let me first state the objection. It is the proud boast of modern science that it has demonstrated

the unity and universality of cosmical law. This magnificent and complex frame of nature is one; it is a unit, a universe. And it is held together by a system of universal laws, whose sway extends throughout the illimitable extent of the creation, binding alike the smallest atom and the mightiest planet. Gravitation, for example, which governs the motion of the orange as it falls from the tree, governs also the courses of the most distant suns and stars. The same chemical laws that are observed in substances on this globe of ours obtain also in the great sun itself: of this the spectrum gives us palpable demonstration. And as these laws are universal in space, so also are they universal in the sphere of time: of this Geology, as she reads in the strange palimpsest of the rocks the story of remote prehistoric ages, gives us firm assurance. In a word, all things, through all ages, seem bound with a chain of physical necessity by the law of cause and effect.

Now we are told that as long as this unity and uniformity of natural law was not known or understood men could readily and reasonably believe that God intervened here and there in history and worked miracles. But *now*, in this our day, when this wonderful order of nature has been unveiled to our eyes, it is no longer possible to believe in miracles. To quote from a notorious book which ran a course

of popularity three or four years ago but is already almost forgotten: "Miracle may be the child of imagination, of love, nay, of passionate sincerity, but invariably it lives with ignorance and is withered by knowledge."

Undoubtedly the modern mind is strongly averse to the belief in miracle. The theist, even, objects, for he sees in it on God's part arbitrariness, yea, a breaking of his own law, and "on the part of the world an interruption of her legitimate course."* "A miracle," says Strauss, "would be *a rent in the world*." Now in opposition to this I maintain that belief in miracle is as reasonable now as it ever was; that it is not in the least inconsistent with modern science (unless we set out with a false conception of what a miracle truly is); that belief in miracle is necessitated by a comprehensive view of nature and man; and that, in particular, belief in the miracle of Christianity is the only hope of a sinful and sorrowful world.

In maintaining this position I am alive to the vital importance of the issue involved. I have said that Christianity might be true even if the miracles recorded in the New Testament were *not* true. Yes; but it does not follow from this that the question of the miraculous is of secondary importance and does not affect the essence of the Christian religion.

* Uhlhorn.

Christianity is indeed independent of the truth of any particular miracle (save only the incarnation and the resurrection), but it is not independent of the question of the possibility of miracles. On the contrary, that question touches the very heart and life of Christianity. If there be no miracle, then there is no Christianity, there is no Christ; for Christ is the greatest of miracles, and Christ is Christianity.

Nor is this all. If miracles are impossible, or at least incredible, then there is no revelation of God to man; for it, too, is a miracle. Nor is even this the whole result of that denial. There is, in that case, no personal God, for a God who is shut out of his own world, who cannot, by the supposition, intervene for the help of his own children if he will, is no God. He may be a great artificer, a great mechanic, but he is not the Omnipotent One. Nay, logically, we must go further even than this, and deny the creation; for if miracle is impossible, how can we believe that the visible universe was created? When there was *no* universe, was not its coming into being a miracle? Will any man pretend that any one or all of the laws or forces of nature is enough to account for the *origin* of the universe? Was it *natural* or *supernatural* that this great universe (or the seeds and germs of it, if you prefer) should come into existence?

But worst of all: if miracle be incredible, if God's hands are tied so that he cannot intervene in the processes of nature or the evolution of history, then there is no living God who can hear and help us when we cry to him. We may pray, but no almighty arm can be stretched out for our deliverance in response to our prayer. We are caught in the coil of an iron chain of necessary causes and effects. We are not the free sons of a loving Father, but the slaves of an adamantine fate. Nay, we are orphans in a fatherless world!

1. But leaving the consequences of the denial of miracle, let us proceed to the discussion of our subject. My first proposition is that miracles are possible and credible. Observe the ground upon which they are held impossible, or at least incredible. Strauss's statement of it, just quoted, is the most forcible: "A miracle would be a rent in the world." But why? Various reasons are given. "Because it violates the laws of nature," says one. "Because it suspends them," says another. "Because it faults the omniscience or the wisdom of God," says a third.

But a miracle is not necessarily either a violation or a suspension of the laws of nature. Hume so defined it, but we do not accept his definition. It is not the Bible view. It is not the Christian view. Neither do we acknowledge that to suppose miracles necessary is to suppose that God's wisdom or

omniscience was at fault in the original order of nature. On the contrary, we find in them a special manifestation of wisdom and love to meet the need of his children. The occurrence of a miracle implies the presence of a supernatural or superhuman force —a power outside of and superior to the forces which energize in man or in nature. It is, in other words, a "manifestation of the divine activity which exhibits some special purpose on the part of God." But it is a mere assumption to affirm that this supernatural force cannot enter into the stream of natural causes without violating or suspending the operation of those laws or forces.

It is necessary here to have clear views of God and of nature. Miracles are of course incredible to an atheist, because there is no God to work them. Equally impossible of belief are they to a pantheist like Spinoza, because only a *personal* God can work with a special purpose. They are of course beyond the pale of things credible to any man who holds, with the author of the *Vie de Jésus*, "As for me, I think that there is not in the universe any intelligence superior to that of man."

But I speak to those who believe that God is actively, vitally, incessantly, and everywhere present in the world; yet that it is pliant and flexible to his will as my hand is to me; that he is personally distinct from it; that it is his garment, not his

monument, and that he is the all-wise and the omnipotent.

If there be such a God, why should miracles be impossible? "Because they would break the order which this all-wise God has established. They would disturb the operation of his laws, which modern science shows are uniform and universal in their action. And so we should have arbitrariness and caprice substituted for law and order."

Such an objection loses sight of one entire hemisphere of God's universe. It overlooks the fact that there is a moral order as well as a natural order in God's creation, and that the natural order is inferior to and must be subservient to the moral. The system of *things* is but a small part of God's creation. There is also a system of *souls*, of moral beings. Man and his interests and his activity must be reckoned with as well as nature. *And as a matter of fact man is every day doing what these objectors declare God cannot do.* That is to say, man is by his free will and unfettered choice interfering with, modifying, changing the course of nature, without any of the disastrous results which we are told would follow if *God* should so interfere.

I say man is "changing the course of nature," because man is not as to his *will* a part of the order of nature. His body is held in the chain of physical cause and effect. That far he belongs to what we

mean by "nature," and is under the dominion of the laws of nature. But his *will* is not part of that order; cannot be catalogued among the forces of nature; lies outside of that stream of uniform sequences that flow everywhere and always from the laws of nature. Consequently, to represent the universe as under the bond of uniform law, undisturbed, unmodified by any force or power outside of the forces of nature, is to grossly misrepresent the actual state of the case. The will of man (which governs the action of man) is distinctly a force apart from and independent of the chain of unchangeable cause and effect. It cannot be calculated or weighed, or in any manner determined beforehand. It is the unknown quantity in the equation. Consequently the actual universe does not move like a machine in one fixed groove by the force of unchangeable law, but as it were in an eccentric curve, which is the *resultant* of two forces, a known and an unknown; the force of natural and unchangeable law, and the force of man's will, which is extra-natural and variable.

Here, then, is a force outside of nature, the will of man, acting upon the chain of cause and effect; moving it; modifying the operation of the laws of nature; changing the order of physical nature—doing, in a word, the very thing we are told God cannot do! This imponderable, incalculable force, man's

will, takes hold of the chain of natural causes and turns a wilderness into a garden; or cuts a channel through the isthmus of Suez; or drains a marsh and makes it a fruitful field and a healthy instead of a sickly dwelling-place. In all these cases man certainly interferes with and modifies the result of natural law; but does he *violate* nature's laws? does he *suspend* them? Suppose a cannon-ball is fired, or a stone hurled into the air: is the law of gravitation violated? Does it cease to operate one instant during the rapid flight of the stone or the cannon-ball, driven by a force stronger than gravitation?

Now substitute the will of God for the will of man, and we have a miracle. God may conceivably perform the miracle by using one force of nature to overcome another, as we see dynamic force overcoming mechanical force, or vital force neutralizing chemical; or he may accomplish the result by a direct act of his omnipotent will. But in any case the order of nature is not violated, the laws of nature are not suspended, the harmony of the kosmos is not disturbed. There is no *rent* in the universe; but on the contrary, as we shall see, there is a healing of a breach, a restoration of a lost order, effected by means of miracle.

Surely God must be at least as free as man in his own world! In the light of these considerations who will question the justness of Rousseau's remark,

"Seriously to raise the question [whether God can perform miracles] would be impious if it were not absurd"? Or who will be ashamed to take his stand with Richard Rothe (one of the most enlightened and liberal theists of our age), who said, "I will frankly confess that up to this hour I have never been able to discover any stumbling-block to my intellect in the conception of a miracle"?

2. Miracles, then, are possible; they are not in themselves incredible. But I advance a step further, and affirm that they are *probable.* And for this reason. It is evident that the world is not in a natural state. "Disorder" is as plainly written upon the face of society and upon the moral state of the individual man as "order" is upon the face of nature. *Sin is here!* Whoever ignores this tragic, tremendous fact can have no approach to a true reading of the state of the world. Its blighting touch, its sirocco breath, its destroying hand, are everywhere—upon the body, upon the soul, upon society, upon the world itself. It has broken the harmony and unity of the world. It has violated the integrity of nature. It has made awful discord in the anthem of creation.

Men talk of miracles breaking the order of nature. Why, its order has been broken for immemorial ages by this destroying force of sin! The *moral* order, too, which is far higher and more important

than the natural order, has been violently and disastrously disturbed, so that it would be truer to call it a moral chaos. Now, in view of this sad and sorrowful condition of mankind, we ask, is it probable or not that God, if there be a God, and he be merciful and compassionate as well as powerful, would intervene in the affairs of the world in order to reveal to man some way of deliverance from his evil moral state? I hold that such an interposition would be in the highest degree reasonable. It would be a denial of himself if God did not intervene. But this intervention, in whatever way made, would of necessity be miraculous. It would be a manifestation of God for a special purpose, and in a special form. Here let me call attention to the true nature of miracles. They are not mere marvels, mere displays of supernatural power. They invariably have a moral aim. They embody a redemptive purpose. They are healing agencies. Their purpose is to restore the broken unity of nature and of man, to bring back the lost order and harmony of the world, to reconcile the discords of life, and so at last to fill the universe with peace and joy.

Nor are the miracles arbitrary or capricious. They are part of a great moral order. They are above and beyond the track of mere physical law, but they belong to God's higher sphere and order of spiritual government, and are under reason and law as truly

as the chemical or the vital forces in the sphere of physical nature. They are supernatural, but not anti-natural.

When, therefore, we approach the consideration of the evidence by which the miracles are supported, we must remind ourselves that a special intervention of God for the help of man involved in the fatal net of moral evil was probable just in proportion as we believe God to be the compassionate Father as well as the omnipotent Creator of the world. And such an intervention must needs be miraculous.

3. I come now to my third and last proposition: *Miracles have occurred.*

In proof of this I point to Jesus Christ. I have shown that it is *possible* for God to intervene in the affairs of the world. I have also shown that, the state of mankind being what it is, and God being such a God as we believe him to be, a Father as well as a Creator, it is *probable* he would intervene. Now I affirm that we have in Jesus Christ the proof that he *has* intervened for man's help. In him we see a superhuman character, superhuman wisdom, superhuman power. His person, his teaching, his work, his empire over human hearts, are all such that we cannot classify him with men. In him we have evidently a manifestation of the divine: he is *Emmanuel*, God with us. Only divine power could produce such a manifestation as we see in the Christ of

history. Yes, we need no further proof that miracles have occurred than we have in the character and teaching and work of Jesus of Nazareth as they stand indelibly written on the pillars of time—and as every man who can read and think must, if he is candid, acknowledge them to be. The Miracle of miracles is Jesus Christ.

What now of the miracles recorded in the New Testament? Did *they* occur?

You will observe I have not alleged Christ's miracles in proof of his divine mission. If he wrought miracles (as we believe), then they were credentials of his mission *to those who witnessed them*, and to those who lived in the time of those who witnessed them. But for *us* they have not the same evidential power, because of the lapse of time and the long and complicated chain of evidence necessary to establish their occurrence. To us the long ages of Christian history are the credentials of his mission. These convince us (not the miracles) that Jesus was the Christ.

But now with this great conviction reached we return to the question of the miracles of Christ, and lo! it stands in a totally different light. That such a being as Jesus should work miracles was to be expected. He could not *but* work miracles, one would say. It would have been a miracle if he had not. We have found his character and his words and his

work in history superhuman. Then his life must have been superhuman too. Such an one as he could not move among the forces of nature like other men at all times.

When, therefore, we find the record of miracles in the Gospels we are not surprised. It is only natural the he who wields such power over the turbulent waves of human passion should have been able to still the storm on the Lake of Gennesaret. It is perfectly consistent that he whose voice has for nearly nineteen centuries been calling men out of the charnel-houses of lust and crime into the light and liberty of virtue and purity of life should have been able by the word of his omnipotence to call Lazarus forth from the grave after he had been dead four days already.

The moral miracles are mightier and more marvelous than the physical ones.

We cannot doubt, then, that Jesus wrought miracles. The records of his religion state that he did. It is absolutely certain that his disciples believed that he did. Let those who affirm the existence of legendary elements in the Gospels cut away as much of the record as they will, they cannot cut the miraculous out of it without completely destroying the whole.

So far, then, as the essence of Christianity is concerned, it is comparatively of small moment whether

you are able to believe this or that particular miracle, but it is absolutely illogical and unreasonable—yes, I dare to say also unscientific—to disbelieve that Christ worked miracles, if you believe there was such a Being as we have found him to be. Faith in the supernatural Christ carries with it faith in the miracles he wrought. We hold this faith with the aristocracy of the world's great thinkers, and we hold it without prejudice to our faith in the splendid achievements of modern science in all its departments of investigation.

VII.

MODERN THEORIES OF THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS.

"On a large view of the life of humanity the Resurrection is antecedently likely. So far from being beset by greater difficulties than any other historical fact, it is the one fact toward which the greatest number of lines of evidence converge. In one form or other pre-Christian history is a prophecy of it, and post-Christian history an embodiment of it. . . . Indeed, taking all the evidence together, it is not too much to say that there is no single historic incident better or more variously supported than the Resurrection of Christ. Nothing but the antecedent assumption that it must be false could have suggested the idea of deficiency in the proof of it."—Westcott.

"In a life such as that of Jesus, it is death which is against nature; the Resurrection is a return to the normal state of things, which had been momentarily interrupted."—Godet.

"It would be difficult to understand how from a society held together by over-excitement, issuing in visions, could have proceeded the Christian Church, with its lucidity of thought and earnestness of moral activity. . . . For this failing faith which threatens altogether to faint away at sight of physical dissolution, the Lord's Resurrection is a spectacle of triumph. It opposes one sight to another."—Keim.

VII.

MODERN THEORIES OF THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS.

"Jesus Christ . . . declared to be the Son of God with power . . . by the Resurrection from the dead."—ROM. i. 3, 4.

I POINTED out in my last lecture the futility of the objections made by unbelievers to the belief in miracle, and I hope made good the position that such belief is not in the least degree inconsistent with the deductions of reason or the conclusions of modern science. Only by denying a personal God can it be maintained that miracles are *impossible*. Only by denying both the sin of the world and the goodness of God can it be questioned that miracles are *probable*. Only by blotting from the page of history the character and the teaching and the work of Jesus can it be even plausibly denied that miracles have actually occurred.

Jesus Christ is himself the supreme miracle. But we do not prove his divine mission by his miracles. They have not the same evidential force for the men of the nineteenth century as for those of the first, simply because we are removed from their occurrence by so wide a tract of time. To us the moral

miracles are more convincing than the physical ones; and every year that rolls by adds to their number and their weight.

On the other hand, Jesus Christ is himself the sufficient proof of his miracles. Such an one as he could not but have wrought miracles. We must therefore put into the scale with the evidence for the particular miracles recorded in the New Testament this weighty presupposition in their favor. It cannot indeed be said that our faith in Christ or in Christianity depends upon the certainty of any particular miracle recorded of him, as, for example, the opening of the eyes of blind Bartimeus, or the raising of Lazarus from the dead. But it must be said that faith in miracle *is* essential to any intelligent faith in Christ. A Christ without miracle would be a contradiction in terms.

In the present lecture, however, I ask your consideration of a particular miracle which may fairly be said to be an essential part of Christianity, historically and doctrinally too. I refer to the Resurrection of Christ. It stands upon a different footing from any other miracle—the incarnation alone excepted. It is not merely a part of the Christian history and of the Christian doctrine, it is an essential part. It was the crown and consummation of the life and work of Jesus. In it was bound up the hope of the world. Upon it was built the Christian Church, which is

"the Church of the Resurrection" as the gospel is "the gospel of the Resurrection." Upon its objective reality rested the whole superstructure of Christianity. If the certainty of this fact should be undermined, the Apostle saw the entire Christian system collapse in ruin. "If Christ be not risen," he exclaims, "then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain. Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ: whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not" (I. Cor. xv. 14, 15).*

Now it appears that the first preachers of Christianity appealed to the Resurrection of Jesus on the third day after his crucifixion as the sufficient proof of his divine mission. Thus Paul in our text affirms that Jesus Christ was "declared to be the Son of God with power *by the Resurrection from the dead.*" In other words, the Resurrection of Christ was the supreme evidence of the truth of Christianity.

* "If the Resurrection be not true, the basis of Christian morality, no less than the basis of Christian theology, is gone." Yes, for "even in its ethical aspect Christianity does not offer a system of morality, but a universal principle of morality which springs out of the Resurrection." "The issue cannot be stated too broadly. We are not Christians unless we are clear in our confession on this point. To preach the fact of the Resurrection was the first function of the evangelists; to embody the doctrine of the Resurrection is the great office of the Church; to learn the meaning of the Resurrection is the task not of our age only, but of all."—WESTCOTT, "The Gospel of the Resurrection," pp. 7, 8.

How stands the case to-day? Has the Resurrection any evidential value for us of the nineteenth century?

By many it will be replied that this stupendous miracle, instead of being for us the chief proof of Christianity, is in fact the chief burden and difficulty in the way of its acceptance.

I maintain, on the contrary, that the evidence for the Resurrection is clear and convincing, that the fact itself is in complete harmony with the person and supposed mission of Jesus Christ, and consequently that it stands firm to-day as an independent argument for the truth of Christianity. One of the most careful and profound thinkers of our time has said: "It is not too much to say that there is no single historic incident better or more variously supported than the Resurrection of Jesus Christ."*

Now the first question that arises in this investigation is: Upon what testimony is the belief in the Resurrection supported? To this my narrow limits will permit me to give only a partial answer. Of numerous witnesses, we have time to examine only one. Let it be the apostle Paul. He lived indeed eighteen hundred years ago, but he has left among many letters four which are completely available for our purpose, because their genuineness and authenticity are universally admitted by scholars,

* Westcott, "The Gospel of the Resurrection," p. 136.

skeptical as well as Christian. In every one of these (Romans, I. and II. Corinthians, and Galatians) he alludes to the Resurrection of Christ as an indisputable fact. For example, turn to I. Corinthians xv., where he writes: "I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins, . . . and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the Scriptures: and that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve: after that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep. After that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles. And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time."

Now consider the force of this testimony. This epistle, the genuineness of which is questioned by no one, is acknowledged to have been written within about twenty-five years after the death and alleged Resurrection of Jesus. It refers to the period of St. Paul's conversion, which was within ten years after that event. It is as if he had said: "Ten years after the death of Christ, I, who had been a zealous and conscientious persecutor of the religion of Jesus of Nazareth, was converted to Christianity by a revelation of the risen Jesus to me on the way to Damascus. I had, moreover, the testimony of various persons who had seen him after his Resurrection."

It is not too much to say that the conversion of St. Paul is alone a distinct and sufficient proof of the reality of the Resurrection and of the truth of the Christian religion. I can perfectly understand how it came to pass that Lord Lyttleton, who undertook to demonstrate the falsity of Christianity by the story of this conversion of the chief representative of Judaism, was by the study of that remarkable event himself converted into a firm believer in the divine origin of the religion he sought to overthrow.

By one flash of conviction this bitter enemy and relentless persecutor of the Christians is changed into as zealous a preacher and propagator of the faith, against all his cherished beliefs, in the face of every worldly interest, at the cost of every intellectual ambition. And from that day forward to the end of his life, during thirty stormy years, he faced persecution and contumely, hardships and losses, imprisonment and death, for the sake of this Jesus of Nazareth whom he had before hated and persecuted! All this he tells us in these unchallenged documents that lie before us. And the explanation of this marvelous transformation of this brilliant young Jewish rabbi, the idol and the hope of his people, into a Christian? One word tells the story, *he had "seen the Lord Jesus Christ"* (I. Cor. ix.). The risen glorified Lord had appeared to him, appre-

hended him, spoken to him. As to this fact Paul never wavered. It was wrought into his very soul. It was the most intense conviction of his being. It became the dominant force in his life. Surely this man was a competent witness! "He was not separated from the events, as we are, by centuries of time. He was not liable to be blinded, as we are, by the dazzling glamour of a victorious Christendom. He had mingled with men who had watched from Bethlehem to Golgotha the life of the Crucified, not only with his simple-hearted followers, but with his learned and powerful enemies. He had talked with the priests who had consigned him to the cross; he had put to death the followers who had wept beside his tomb. He had to face the unutterable horror which to any orthodox Jew was involved in the thought of a Messiah who had hung upon a tree. He had heard again and again the proofs which satisfied an Annas and a Gamaliel that Jesus was a deceiver of the people. The events on which the apostles relied in proof of his divinity had taken place in the full blaze of contemporary knowledge. He had not to deal with uncertainties of criticism or assaults on authenticity. He could question not ancient documents, but living men. . . . He had thousands of means close at hand to test the reality or unreality of the Resurrection, in which up to this time he had so passionately disbelieved. In accept-

ing this half-crushed and wholly execrated faith he had everything in the world to lose—he had nothing conceivable to gain; and yet, in spite of all, overwhelmed by a conviction he felt to be irresistible, Saul the Pharisee became a witness of the Resurrection, a preacher of the cross." *

But his witness does not stand alone. He enumerates six appearances of our Lord after his resurrection—five besides that which he himself witnessed.

Two of these were to individual apostles, namely, Peter and James. Two of them were to all the apostles. One of them was to five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part were still alive at the time Paul wrote.

Now we know (again from these unchallenged historical documents, the four first epistles of Paul) that he had intimate intercourse with both St. Peter and St. James, as well as the other apostles, and was in familiar relations with the Christians of Jerusalem. Hence this passage gives us all the assurance that the honesty and capacity of this witness *can* give to the fact that Jesus had frequently appeared to those who knew him well, and that there was in the numerous Christian communities already formed, as well as in Jerusalem itself, a firm persuasion and conviction that he had risen from the dead. Moreover, this fact was not incidental to their faith, but

* Farrar's "St. Paul," p. 115.

was the most prominent article it contained. The church was built upon it as its foundation. Upon this it rested. From this came its vigorous life, its conquering energy, its triumphant hope. Wherever the apostles and evangelists went, they preached *Jesus and the Resurrection.* And the intensity of conviction which we have seen characterized St. Paul's conviction in regard to it appears to have been characteristic of the entire church. What account, then, are we to give, as reasonable men, of testimony such as this? Is it valid, and is it sufficient to establish the fact of the Resurrection?

If not, why not?

Will it be suggested that the whole story was a fabrication, and these men—above all, Paul himself—deliberate impostors? If any man entertains that idea, let him read Paley's "Evidences," and he will find that powerful reasoner has completely demolished that theory. It has not a foot to stand on after his vigorous assault. I cannot repeat his arguments here. But it is unnecessary. Let any candid man read these epistles of the great Apostle to the Gentiles and ask himself whether *such* writings are those of an impostor? In fact, however, the leaders of the most advanced infidelity have long since abandoned the idea that the apostles intended to deceive their readers, or to practice a pious fraud.

"History," says Baur, "must hold to the assertion

that to the faith of the disciples the Resurrection of Jesus Christ was a fact, certain and indisputable. It is in this faith only that Christianity found a ground solid enough to erect upon it the superstructure of its whole historic development." And Strauss declares that "the historian must acknowledge that the disciples firmly believed that Jesus was risen." He refers to the passage before us in these words: "The fact that the apostle Paul heard from the mouth of Peter, of James, and of others besides, that Jesus had appeared to them, and that they all, and the five hundred brethren also, were absolutely convinced that they had seen Jesus living after he had died, is one which we will not call in question."

The theory of imposture or pious fraud as an explanation of the apostolic testimony to the Resurrection need no longer be reckoned with. It has been abandoned by intelligent skeptics.

New theories have been advanced to evade the acknowledgment of the reality of the fact for which the martyrs gave up their lives. Let us examine them.

1. It has been suggested that there was no resurrection, but a *resuscitation;* that Jesus was not dead, but had swooned from exhaustion, and that when he had been taken down from the cross and wrapped in fine linen and laid in the tomb of Joseph, he afterward revived, and so appeared to his disciples.

This hypothesis is beset with palpable improbabilities, or rather impossibilities. That a man whose vital energies had been subjected to the drain of that terrible night of mental and physical suffering preceding the crucifixion—the agony in the garden, the arrest, the two trials, the buffeting, the scourging—that frightful and exhausting punishment—should have revived after hanging six hours on the cruel cross and after the spear had been thrust into his heart, and thirty-six hours later, having been in the meantime without food or drink, have been so vigorous and full of force as to appear to the disciples as the very Lord of life and glory—this surely is the very utmost limit of absurdity. Strauss is too clear-eyed to accept such a monstrous improbability. He exclaims: "A man half dead, dragging himself in languor and exhaustion out of his tomb, with wounds requiring careful and continuous medical treatment—could he in such a state have produced upon the minds of the disciples the impression that he was the victor over death and the grave—the Prince of life? . . . *Such* a return to life could only have served to weaken the impressions which Jesus had in his former life made upon their minds, . . . and could never have turned their sorrow into enthusiasm and intensified their admiration into adoration." *

* Quoted by Godet. Lectures in defense of the Christian faith, p. 32.

Nor are these all the incongruities involved in this hypothesis. Were it the true explanation we should be confronted by several awkward questions: What became of Jesus after his resuscitation from the swoon? Did he die as other men? If so, how are we to account for the joyful confidence of his disciples in his triumph over death? "Christ, being raised from the dead, dieth no more," was their triumphant confidence.

Again: Did the disciples ever discover their mistake in supposing that Jesus had really died and really risen from the dead? If so, they were guilty of imposture in adhering to the proclamation of his resurrection. If not, we are confronted by a more shocking alternative still: Jesus himself was an impostor in permitting them to believe him risen from the dead, when in fact he had only recovered from a swoon.

It is safe to say that neither of these opinions could muster a corporal's guard in its defense among intelligent and educated critics to-day, however unfriendly they might be to Christianity.

2. What remains, then, to those who still deny that the universal faith of the Church in the Resurrection rests upon the rock of truth? Is not the case closed against them? "Not yet!" they answer. "There is still a hypothesis which meets the conditions of the case without compelling us to believe

the alleged miracle of the Resurrection. It is possible that Mary Magdalene, who seems to have been the first witness of the so-called Resurrection, being of an enthusiastic temperament (of this, by the way there is no evidence), and laboring under mental disease (another assumption), fancied that she saw Jesus the morning of the third day when she went to the sepulcher. It is further possible that the disciples were so excited by this story repeated to them by the Magdalene that they also, one after another and then collectively, fell victims to the same delusion, and fancied they too saw him risen from the dead. It is again possible that these visions spread, almost like an epidemic, among the followers of Jesus, who, being credulous persons, accepted them as realities, and became so firmly persuaded of them that they devoted their lives to the preaching of this extraordinary occurrence, and built upon it the splendid structure of the Christian Church, which has filled the ages with miracles of beneficent activity."

This is the theory of visions, and reasonable men are asked to accept it as a plausible explanation of the facts asserted by St. Paul, and a satisfactory account of the origin of the mightiest moral agency ever planted on this earth! Now let us confront this theory with some of the facts of the case.

(1) Neither Mary Magdalene nor the apostles were

in the state of mind favorable to such a vision as this hypothesis supposes. The narrative which is quoted for the fact of her visit to the sepulcher informs us that she was profoundly depressed, and so far from being predisposed to believe in his resurrection, that when he did appear she supposed him to be the gardener. The same is true of the disciples generally. The women went to the tomb to embalm the dead body; and when they reported his resurrection to the disciples, these refused to believe the fact. "Their words seemed to them as idle tales, and they believed them not" (Luke xxiv. 11). The same was true of the two disciples journeying to Emmaus. They were sad and sorrowful, they had abandoned faith and hope in Jesus. "We trusted it had been he which should have redeemed Israel." In all the extant narratives this utter paralysis of faith and hope on the part of the disciples stands out clear and unmistakable. Far from being predisposed to believe his resurrection, they were *slow* to believe. "O fools and slow of heart to believe!" were the words of Jesus. "He upbraided them with their unbelief." Thomas would not believe until he had palpable proof, not by his sense of sight merely, but of touch as well. An able writer of our time has pointed out the fact that "according to well-established principles of mental philosophy three mental states are necessary to enable even the most

enthusiastic and credulous persons to mistake subjective impressions for external realities. These are prepossession, fixed idea, and expectancy." But there is not only no evidence of the existence of these mental states, there is distinct and abundant evidence of the existence of an opposite condition of mind.

(2) Look at another fact. This "vision" spoke to them, held long conversations with them, walked with them in broad daylight, gave them extended instruction as to the propagation of the gospel and the constitution of his Church. Is this consistent with what we know of other instances of mental hallucination? Surely if these Galilean fishermen, under the influence of enthusiasm and credulity, and affected by morbid mental conditions, could evolve in their disordered fancy the program of the mightiest social and moral and religious organism the world has ever known, it is time to proclaim that mental hallucinations are to be sought after as the fruitful sources of wisdom, and the morbid mind is to be looked to as the parent of the most beneficent plans for the well-being of mankind.

(3) Test this theory again by the fact that the Apostle affirms in this never-disputed document (I. Corinthians) that the risen Christ was seen on two occasions by all the apostles, and again by five hundred brethren at once. Is this within the limits

of the wildest imagination—that eleven persons should at the same moment fancy that they saw the same person, and that he spoke to them, and spoke the same words? And that they all imagined that he ate and drank with them on purpose to convince them of the reality of his appearance—that it was not a phantom they saw, but their well-beloved Master himself? Even this does not represent the full extent of the demand upon our credulity which this hypothesis makes. For it asks us to suppose that in broad daylight five hundred persons had simultaneously the same hallucination—beheld the same vision, and heard this phantom speak to them in the same words! Who is credulous enough to believe such an explanation of the admitted fact that these persons believed they saw and conversed with, and ate with, and listened to, the same Jesus whom they had known and loved before his crucifixion!

(4) But if all these objections could be met, or ignored, there is still another which interposes an insuperable barrier to the acceptance of the theory of visions as an explanation of the Resurrection. It is this: upon that hypothesis, *what became of the body of Jesus?*

Remember the state of the case. St. Paul's undisputed testimony (not to refer to any other) establishes the fact that the supposed Resurrection took place on the third day after his crucifixion. If, then,

the body did not rise, but remained in the custody of the disciples, the stories of its resurrection would quickly have been dissipated by the inexorable fact of the existence of the dead body. If under those circumstances they had continued to preach the Resurrection, they would plainly have been guilty of a willful and deliberate imposture—a supposition which has been abandoned, as I have shown, by almost all intelligent and educated skeptics. If, on the other hand, the body was in the custody of the Romans or the Jews, why was it not produced to confound the deluded disciples who were turning the world upside down preaching that Jesus had risen from the dead? Only a few weeks elapsed between the crucifixion and the day of Pentecost when all Jerusalem was in an uproar over this new doctrine of Jesus and the Resurrection. Now it was of the greatest importance to the Jews to confute the teachers of this sect of the Nazarenes; and had they produced the body of Jesus, they would have completely overwhelmed them. For then they would have been found false witnesses of God in testifying that Jesus was risen, or else all men would have pitied or despised them as deluded dreamers; and so they would have lost all credit with the people, and the new sect would have been strangled at its birth. Argument, authority, imprisonment, scourging, would all alike have been

unnecessary to crush these deluded fanatics who were doing such mischief to their cherished customs and institutions. By simply exhibiting the dead body in public their aim would have been reached. There would have been an end of Christianity there and then, and once for all! But this they did not, because they could not, do.

Thus neither friends nor enemies could produce the body. What, then, is the rational conclusion? The body had disappeared, because Jesus had indeed risen from the dead. The disciples were not deluded by the phantom of an excited brain. Those numerous appearances were realities; and the Christian Church was *not* founded on the hallucination of an hysterical woman. The mightiest moral agency the world has ever seen did not spring from a delusion —a chance trick of the senses. The courage and the faith, the rugged strength and the patient endurance that conquered the world, were not born of the phantoms of disordered brains. The practical sense, the well-poised judgment, the lucidity of thought, the invulnerable dialectics of the author of the epistles to the Romans and the Corinthians did not flow from a mind so morbid in its action as to be unable to distinguish between a fancy and a fact.

We may fairly claim, then, that the skeptical theories put forward to account for the belief in the Resurrection break down under their own weight; and we are left to consider whether the evidence

does not constrain us to accept the Fact as the solution of the Belief. And *then* this stupendous miracle, which had seemed, it may be, a chief burden and difficulty in the way, stands out in its true light as an independent—yes, and sufficient—evidence of the truth of Christianity. Then we see indeed that "Jesus Christ was declared to be the Son of God with power by the Resurrection from the dead." For we cannot forget, while considering the special evidence for the Resurrection, what we have already seen as to the character and teaching and work of this Jesus of Nazareth. "He spake as never man spake." He lived as never man lived. He has wrought in history as never man wrought. All this we must carry with us in inquiring whether he was indeed raised from the dead. So doing, we cannot be doubtful of the answer. With St. Peter we must hail him as the Prince of life, and with him perceive an *inherent necessity* for the Resurrection. "He *could not* be holden of death."

Yes, the evidence before us goes to prove a fact which in truth was to have been expected, which was in the deepest sense *natural*. For that he who came to redeem mankind from sin and death should have triumphed over death, and given a sorrowing and doubting world a palpable instance of life and immortality, to be for all ages the triumphant assurance that man shall conquer death and dissolution—this surely is in harmony with both the nature of

the Redeemer and the need of the redeemed. Such an One as he could not but have risen from the dead. Death could not have enduring dominion over the Prince of life.

And so I bring these lectures to a close. None of my readers can feel more than I do how inadequate they are to the length and depth and height and breadth of the great theme of which they treat. But let it be remembered that I did not set out to make a full and complete presentation of the arguments for believing in the divine origin of the Christian religion, nor to defend or establish the whole circle of its doctrines, but to give, in a short compass, *sufficient reasons for believing the central truth of Christianity*, viz., that Jesus Christ is a Superhuman Being, yea, the very Son of God himself. This, I humbly trust, I have succeeded in doing. Let the candid reader judge whether the arguments here adduced do not make it evident that, without assuming the authority or inspiration of the Scriptures or the certainty of the miracles there recorded, we have in the undeniable facts of history—in the Character of Christ, in the Words of Christ, in the Work of Christ, and finally in his Resurrection—conclusive evidence that he was more than man, that he was, as he claimed, the Son of God mighty to save.

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